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ABSTRACT

The document contains proceedings from a seminar on the education of gifted and talented children in Australia. The keynote address, "Expectations for Educating the Gifted and Talented" delivered by R. Strom, is divided into five main sections: school expectations (goal setting and motivation, scope of learning, mental health and stress); teacher expectations (attitudes and skills, curriculum design, parent-teacher conferences); peer expectations (cultural changes in learning, benefits of peer instruction, developing peer esteem); parent expectations (early environment, family communication, advice and guidance); and societal expectations (access to opportunity, range of talent, sources of identification). Individual reports cover six discussion groups on curriculum, research, support services, and teacher education. A general summary reviews discussion group recommendations, teacher evaluation, home-school relationships, collaborative teaching, and parent education. Also provided are teacher evaluation forms, a stress inventory, guidelines for parent-teacher relationships, a seminar timetable, and a list of participants. (SB)

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NATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

Melbourne 8-10 November 1981

PROCEEDINGS

Commonwealth Schools Commission
December 1981

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FOREWORD

The *Commonwealth Schools Commission Act* 1973 requires the Commission to have regard to:

> the desirability of providing special educational opportunities for students who have demonstrated their ability in a particular field of studies, including scientific, literary, artistic or musical studies.

In view of this requirement and in response initially to a request made in 1974 by the then Commonwealth Minister for Education, Mr Kim Beazley, the Commission has become involved in a number of activities concerned with assistance for students demonstrating outstanding ability and with the provision of opportunities and environments in which latent abilities can develop.

These activities have included attendance at the First World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children in 1975 by a representative of the Commission; the funding of a study on Special Interest Centres in 1976; two visits to Australia by Professor Miriam Goldberg of Columbia University, New York and subsequent publication of her paper *Issues in the Education of Gifted and Talented Children in Australia and the United States;* and the production of a paper by the Commission in 1979 entitled *The Education of Gifted Students; a Discussion Paper.*

To follow up the discussion engendered by its discussion paper and to obtain advice on how to proceed, the Commission established in March 1981 an Advisory Group chaired by Dr David Mossenson, a member of the Commission and Director-General of Education in Western Australia. An early recommendation of this group was that a national seminar be held late in 1981.

The seminar, which took place in Melbourne from 8 to 10 November 1981, attempted to bring together the outcome of discussion promoted by the Commission within the last two or three years and the experience of administrators, practitioners and others associated with the education of gifted and talented children. It was intended that the debate generated by this process would be the means of providing guidance to the Commission and other interested organisations and groups for future action.

Primary aims of the seminar were two-fold. The first was to identify and clarify particular issues and questions which emerge from the Commission's discussion paper, Professor

Goldberg's paper and a paper presented by Dr Mossenson in August 1981 at the Fourth World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children entitled *Legitimizing Provision for Gifted Children : An Australian Perspective*. The second aim was to establish networks among people in Australia with an interest, experience and expertise in the education of gifted and talented children.

The seminar was organised around a keynote speaker, discussion groups and plenary sessions, ending with a summation and presentation of guidelines for the future by the keynote speaker acting as a seminar reactor. There were six groups, one for research, one for teacher education and two each for curriculum and support services.

Participation in the seminar was by invitation and nomination with the object of bringing together a diverse group of influential and interested people. Groups represented included State Education Departments; the National Council of Independent Schools; the Catholic Education Commission; tertiary institutions; the Curriculum Development Centre; the National Aboriginal Education Committee; the Australian Teachers Federation; the Australian Council for Educational Research; Gifted Children Associations; the Australian Council of State School Organisations; the Commonwealth Schools Commission; the Choice and Diversity Project (a Commonwealth Schools Commission project); and some individuals selected for their particular expertise and experience. The person nominated by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia was not able to attend.

The keynote speaker was Dr Robert Strom, Professor of Education and Director of the Parent-Child Laboratory, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona. Dr Strom visited Australia in 1975 as a Fulbright-Hays Senior Scholar at the Canberra College of Advanced Education, and he has visited Australia on other occasions.

Outstanding features of the seminar were the enthusiasm of participants and the thoroughness with which discussion group leaders fulfilled their role. Acknowledged also is the planning and conduct of the seminar by members of the Advisory Group, in particular Mr Keith Creed's acceptance of the task of Convenor which involved a major contribution to the general discussion and considerable administrative responsibility.

For 1982 the Government has directed the Commission to consider proposed initiatives for gifted children within the total funds available for Projects of National Significance. The Commission's response, which has been accepted by the Government, has been to allocate $0.1m

for the support of policy development and special national projects in the area of education for gifted and talented children. I hope that the work done at the seminar will assist the Commission to make the best possible use of these funds.

P.D. Tannock
Chairman
Commonwealth Schools Commission

EXPECTATIONS FOR EDUCATING THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Keynote Address by
Dr Robert Strom

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EXPECTATIONS FOR EDUCATING THE GIFTED AND TALENTED*

By Robert D Strom, Professor of Education and
Director of the Parent-Child Laboratory, Arizona State University

What kind of an education is desirable for gifted and talented children? To find out, let's first acknowledge that boys and girls learn from a number of sources including their school curriculum, teachers, peers, parents and society. Better instruction calls for improving each of these influences. Therefore, my comments will focus on the following questions:

- How can the school program become more worthwhile?
- In what ways can teachers add to their effectiveness?
- What kinds of interaction with peers ought to be encouraged?
- How can parents be helpful throughout the growing-up process?
- What are the educational obligations of society?

SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

Goalsetting and Motivation

Some time ago I published a study entitled 'Recognising Problems of the Successful' (Strom, 1973). My subjects were 300 high achieving university students. After indicating on a checklist the frequency of occurrence for which they, as individuals, had confronted each of fifty obstacles to achievement in elementary and high school, every student was interviewed relative to their responses. Many members of the success sample identified goal confusion as having been a major problem. Again and again they reported the reluctance of adults to let them determine their own course of direction. Obviously adults find it tempting to set goals for gifted children because the direction they should pursue seems clear from their pattern of strength. But it is erroneous to suppose that anyone who is bright will remain in school to pursue someone else's goals. Instead, when a sense of direction is lacking, even the most capable students may

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* Keynote address to the National Seminar on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, Melbourne, Australia, November 8, 1981, sponsored by the Commonwealth Schools Commission

discontinue their education. The fact is that nearly 20 per cent of all dropouts in the United States are gifted, a far larger proportion than their representation in the general population (Rice, 1980).

It is relevant to observe that, when intelligence is above average, the most powerful predictor of future achievement is motivation - setting goals and pursuing them. This assertion is confirmed by the longitudinal research of McClelland (1976a, 1976b). Using a variety of achievement measures and projective techniques, he found that high achieving adults are those who have learned to choose their own objectives, estimate accurately what they can accomplish and know their own limitations. McClelland wanted to learn about the durability of achievement motivation, whether an early measure of it would accurately predict success. To find out, the Harvard team administered his measures to more than 10,000 college students in eighteen countries. Fifteen years later, a follow-up study revealed that most of the successful persons, defined as having attained executive and managerial positions, were the same individuals who years earlier had scored high on measures of achievement motivation.

At school teachers come armed with sets of objectives, usually expressed in terms of minimal competencies that everyone is expected to achieve. Certainly this is appropriate. But in our quest to make schools accountable for basic instructional outcomes, we must not eliminate the chance for students to become self-directed. If we want the young to be responsible, it begins with goal setting, having to be accountable for reaching one's own reasonable purposes. In the process of guided decision-making, boys and girls can learn to select goals wisely, to modify their aspirations when necessary, and to disengage themselves from the unreasonable expectations of others.

Unless children learn to set goals, they cannot learn to properly evaluate themselves. Over fifty years ago, Terman (1927) identified trustworthiness by parents and teachers as a common characteristic of gifted students. If such students are to lead others in setting group goals, surely they must begin by setting their own. At the moment we do not really know what goals children are capable of achieving at various mental ages. But in conferences with them we can initiate this process. Indeed we should insist that boys and girls establish some of their own goals and that these include certain non-academic objectives as well. In turn, our role as teachers and parents enlarges to include supporting a child's pursuit of his own goals as well as those goals set for him by others. It is important to realise that giving children choices is no substitute for teaching them to set goals. Nor is it enough to consider how we can individualise instruction. Besides respecting a pupil's need for individualised learning, we must also respect his

individuality by helping him pursue his own purposes. Teachers can facilitate goalsetting by encouraging students to try new activities without evaluative threat, informing them of their limitations as well as their strengths, and assisting them in setting reasonable standards for performance. All of these elements are necessary for an effective curriculum.

The gifted need more opportunity to explore vocational goals. Some of them could succeed in any among a variety of occupations. But proper career planning requires an information base that is well beyond what is currently available in schools. What happens to a student whose aptitude scores indicate s/he could do well in medicine or engineering, finance or law? Too often the career decision is reached without any direct observation or even conversation with persons in the prospective fields. Usually gifted students do not explore the satisfactions, difficulties or lifestyles of their potential choices. One of the major reforms needed in gifted education is an extensive career orientation offered in conjunction with all of the professional groups in a community. Although career education is essential for the gifted, it is almost always more of a fabrication than a reality. The schools cannot lay claim to education for leadership so long as students have to choose an occupation in the present manner.

The Scope of Learning

Most aspects of school curriculum invite exploration beyond the class presentation. So educators strive to supplement their lessons by making additional resources available. Usually this is a time-consuming task which reflects commitment. However, by itself the method is insufficient for enlarging student perspective. It has been estimated that the sum of knowledge is doubling every eight years. Given this explosion of information, gifted students ought not to be limited to the sources of learning offered by their school or city library. A more creative response, at least in large cities, is to negotiate a formal agreement with the university for limited access to its library and computer facilities. Such an agreement can permit gifted youngsters to learn and practise up-to-date research skills while acquiring a broader range of understanding than any elementary or high school can possibly provide them.

It is estimated that computer-assisted instruction, used by only 15 per cent of the schools in 1970, will be used by 85 per cent of the schools in 1985 (Bitter, 1980). By then, most of the high school curriculum should be available as software. Already the most popular inservice training course is computer literacy and microcomputers are the most frequently purchased item of equipment by schools. These

versatile instruments accommodate a variety of input/output devices and perform at the reasonable cost of 1¢ per 100,000 computations. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics recommends that problem solving become the focus of math instruction in the 1980s and that programs take full advantage of the power of calculators and computers at all grade levels. Similarly, thanks to the electronic and game industry, science and social studies educators have come to recognise the immense possibilities for simulation activities in which computers present users with decision-making alternatives (Strom and Bernard, 1982).

I believe that educators of the 1980s who strive to improve schooling of the gifted should emphasise applied computer technology. Instead of expressing anxiety about the effect computers may have on methods of learning, teachers can combine their creativity and computer literacy to produce relevant, appealing, and worthwhile lessons. Teachers who expand the resources from which students are expected to learn (books, overheads, cassettes, films, and now computers) magnify their own influence, increase student independence, and enlarge the scope of instruction.

Mental Health and Stress

Our attitudes toward health are reflected in a comprehensive report by General Mills (Yankelovich, 1979). Using a probability sample of adults and teenagers statistically projectable to all families in the country, the researchers found that eight of ten persons felt a need for less stress in their daily lives. Indeed most people agreed that stress is one of the most important factors preventing them from being as healthy as they could be.

Because schools are expected to promote mental health, one might suppose that teachers and students experience little stress. On the contrary, there are increasing numbers of articles describing the phenomenon known as teacher burnout (Sparks, 1979). To further complicate the situation, teachers do not usually perceive themselves as a source of stress on students. Nevertheless, when learners are subject to unreasonable expectations, their mental health is at risk. The most common response is complaining to peers; some youngsters decide to quit school; others turn to alcohol or drugs for relief from stress; a few choose suicide as the ultimate withdrawal. More of us who teach must come to recognise that, like ourselves, students view school as their work. They spend six to eight hours a day seriously engaged in classes. During an era in which adults seek shorter work weeks, longer vacations, earlier retirement and more time to relax, it is disappointing that many of them are unwilling to support the same opportunities for children.

To illustrate, children in the primary grades typically have one teacher who assigns homework. However, in junior and senior high school, students receive instruction from five to six teachers. These teachers need to know what they collectively expect of the gifted child. Because none of the faculty is aware of what their colleagues demand in terms of homework, the students in accelerated or advanced placement classes may be responsible for three or four time-consuming assignments simultaneously. When demands of this kind are continuous, conscientious students experience unreasonable stress, lose their access to leisure time, and move toward alienation. It is clear that junior and senior high school faculties should co-ordinate their homework assignments so that students are not overwhelmed. Parents and students can be consulted in developing homework plans, which might include a maximum number of assignments, provision for flexible deadlines and creative use of the computer to monitor the operation.

I would also urge that periods of reprieve be built into student schedules. Anyone who participates in the creative process knows that upon completion of a project which has required much preparation and emotional energy, there is a need to temporarily set more moderate expectations, a chance to partially withdraw and to recover. Teachers who fail to honour this natural and necessary response pattern are unreasonable and cannot fulfil their obligation to support mental health.

In addition to reducing undue stress, schools should help gifted and talented children cope with the inevitable stresses they will face. Presently more than 200 institutions, including Harvard, Stanford and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), are conducting experiments on the effects of meditation. The general picture seems to be that adult meditators enjoy enhanced psychological well-being, reduced anxiety, improved perception and lower rates of drug and alcohol abuse (Shapiro, 1980; Walsh, 1979). Compared with non-meditators, people who have meditated for more than a year report a greater degree of job satisfaction, tend to be more productive, are less inclined to want to change employers, enjoy better interpersonal relationships with co-workers and supervisors, and maintain a more favourable impression of how they are viewed by others (Kory and Bloomfield, 1978).

Similar outcomes have been reported for experiments with students at all grade levels (Murdock, 1978; Morris, 1976). It seems that students who are taught to meditate make significantly greater gains in creativity than non-meditating peers; they show a reduction in levels of anxiety; their ability to shut out distractions is increased; and they learn to concentrate on a single issue for longer periods of time, which in turn promotes more rapid learning. If during the growing-up years students learn to alter their own

physiological responses through meditation, they can prevent stress from interfering with learning and apply the method for a lifetime. This is a far better alternative for coping with pressure than reliance on alcohol, drugs or withdrawal.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

Attitudes and Skills

The attitudes of those who teach the gifted is a matter of public concern. One view is that teachers show favouritism towards students who have been identified as extraordinary. Support for this contention comes from the many so-called pygmalion experiments, in which randomly-selected students have been arbitrarily labelled as persons with high potential (Rosenthal, 1976). Other self-fulfilling prophecy studies focusing on teacher behaviour have revealed that educators convey more content to supposedly gifted students, give them more time to answer questions, provide more positive feedback, and look, smile and nod at them more often. Then too, there is evidence that once teachers have formed a favourable attitude it is sustained in spite of conflicting information. Consider a study of education students at the University of Minnesota, who were obliged to teach a card trick to one person of supposedly moderate ability and to another person labelled as superior. Both learners were in fact of equal ability. However, when the lessons were finished, each of the teachers expressed the belief that their allegedly gifted learners had performed better than their non-gifted students - even when the reverse was true (Myers and Ridl, 1981).

A less favourable impression of teachers comes from Mensa, the society of individuals who score in the top 2 per cent of intelligence or achievement tests. Recently adult members of Mensa were surveyed about their elementary and high school experiences. Most of them marked 'difficulty with teachers' as a frequent negative experience (*Gifted*, 1981). A similar assessment by Wellborn (1980) reports experiences of creative and talented students who were scorned, ridiculed, and deprived of suitable challenge.

Still another perception is that teachers ignore the gifted and talented. Sometimes this occurs because of demands for accountability. In order to bring low achievers up to minimal competence, teachers feel obliged to spend much of the class time working with them. The tendency is to suppose that so long as gifted children earn high grades and stay out of trouble, it is unnecessary to consider their dissatisfactions. By this reasoning we contribute to alienation and underachievement. This would appear to be the case in Iowa where recent studies concluded that of all students with IQs over 130, 45 per cent had grade averages lower than C (Johnson, 1981).

Whether teachers favour the gifted, reject them for behaving in non-conforming ways, or fail to notice their talent, better training is implicated. One way to improve the readiness of teachers is by offering a course on gifted and talented children that includes a practicum experience in the schools. Listening to gifted students and asking questions is the most effective way of getting to know them. That teachers need better listening skills is reflected by a nation-wide study representing the twenty-three million homes in the United States with children under thirteen years of age (Yankelovich, 1977). One of the topics discussed with children in the sample area was ease of communication with significant people in their lives. The results showed that next to their friends, children find it easiest to communicate with their mothers. The people with whom most children find it hard to communicate are school principals and teachers.

But why emphasise questioning skills? What anyone learns or fails to learn often depends on the kinds of questions they ask. Because students acquire the skill of questioning in the same way that they gain other skills, the example set by teachers is important. Studies show that teachers spend more time asking questions than any other activity. Unfortunately, the least common use of questions in the class-room is stimulation of divergent thought. Gifted students will have more opportunities to grow and demonstrate their learning as teachers improve in the ability to listen and ask questions.

Design of Curriculum

Teachers in self-contained classes often try to help the gifted by providing supplementary curriculum. The responsibility for curriculum development is even greater in pull out programs where teachers must decide which skills or subject matter deserve attention, and then justify the decision to pupils, parents and administrators. One might suppose that because instructional success with the gifted so obviously depends on knowing how to augment the regular school program, prospective teachers must receive considerable training in curriculum design. Regrettably, this is rarely the case. As such courses become available, we can expect the following benefits: teachers who know how to determine the consequences of their programs; teachers who know how to ensure continuity within a long-term curriculum; teachers who know how to co-ordinate their collective assignments; teachers who know how to identify and wisely use community resources; and teachers who know how to choose worthwhile learning activities.

It has been my observation that teachers who are unfamiliar with principles of curriculum development regard themselves as considerate when they select learning activities largely on the basis of their low probability to elicit student complaints of boredom. During the past few years we have

witnessed an extension of the boredom syndrome from the gifted, who are characterised as perpetually bored because they are held back, to students in general. During its transition, the boredom phenomenon has shifted from objections about lack of stimulation to a growing demand by students at all levels of achievement that everything in school become fun and entertaining. This essentially dependent view would make teachers solely responsible for student motivation and justify the increasingly familiar comment, 'I shouldn't have to learn this because it bores me'. In contrast, as teachers help students set their own goals for learning and assist them in acquiring skills to pursue personal objectives, the rest is up to the learner. By this reasoning teachers remain responsible for instruction but are not responsible for someone else's boredom and they can choose not to be defensive about it.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Whatever the gifted child's age or level of achievement, overall development can be enhanced when parents and teachers assess progress and plan together. I wish to propose a new conferencing procedure, one which enables both parties to be prepared. Given their limited time together, parents and teachers must get to the important issues quickly. This can be accomplished by devising two lists of conference questions: one for parents to ask the teacher and another for the teacher to ask the parents. The agenda items are intended as a means to foster a better partnership by improving communication between the school and the home. Naturally, during a conference either party can raise other issues besides those appearing on the lists.

Here's how the agenda works. A letter is sent to parents two weeks prior to the conference along with the questionnaire worksheet (see example on following pages). During the conference parents and teacher can decide together what each party will do to assist the child. As more people come to accept the partnership concept, it seems essential that parent-teacher conferences are guided by a set of practical procedures. I suggest the following guidelines.

Dear Parents

You will be contacted in a few days to arrange our parent-teacher conference. Each of us sees your child in different situations and can gain new awareness of his or her needs, strengths, and limitations by sharing our observations. This sharing process may reveal ways in which we can co-operate to the benefit of your child.

I have circled some questions that I'd like to discuss with you at our next conference. You will also find a list of questions that you may wish to discuss with me. Please read the list and choose several questions that you would like me to answer. Place the numbers of your choices on the bottom of this form and return it to me by next Monday. Feel free to add any questions which you do not find included in the list. I am looking forward to our co-operative efforts to make this a productive year for your child.

Sincerely

Jane Smith

Mrs Jane Smith
Fourth Grade Teacher

- -

PARENT QUESTIONS TO TEACHER

After choosing from the list those questions you would like me to answer, please circle them and place the numbers of the questions on the lines below. You may keep the list of circled questions for your record.

#39 #41 #47 #50

Parent Signature Mrs L. Johnson

Other Questions .....

.....

TEACHER QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

1. What types of activities take up your child's leisure time when s/he is alone? With peers? Adults?

2. What activities do you and your child especially enjoy doing together?

3. How does your child act when you identify a mistake or a weakness the child needs to work on?

4. What methods of discipline do you use with your child?

5. What kinds of chores does your child have at home?

6. How does your child handle the chores you assign?

7. What place is available for your child to study without interruption?

8. How do you feel about the homework your child is expected to do?

9. How does your child react to your helping with homework?

10. How often do you and your child read together?

11. How often does your child play and work alone?

12. How do you encourage good behaviour at home?

13. What things at school tend to upset your child?

14. What aspects of school does your child consider the most difficult?

15. What television programs do you and your child watch together?

../Cont'd

16. What observations can you share about your child's relationship with peers?

17. What does your child do when angry? Upset? Doing well?

18. How much sleep does your child usually get each night?

19. What does your child have to say about her/his progress in school?

20. In what ways is your child not meeting your expectations?

21. In what ways is your child working up to your expectations?

22. In your child's opinion, what would make life at school more interesting?

23. What does your child like most about school?

24. Are there any attitudes you hope your child will be able to change?

25. Is your child able to stick to tasks for a long time?

Parent Signature ..... Teacher Signature .....

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PARENT QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

26. What do you like most about my child?

27. How does my child behave when corrected by you? By peers?

28. When my child is angry, how does s/he express it?

29. What does my child really do well? Does the child recognise this strength?

30. How does my child show a sense of humour?

31. In terms of grade level, how is my child doing in reading and math?

32. How does my child handle conflict with peers? With you?

33. How well does my child stick to difficult tasks?

34. What do you take into account when deciding grades?

35. What activities does my child seem to enjoy most in school?

36. How sensitive is my child to the needs of others?

37. How does my child behave on the playground?

38. Does my child bother other children or disturb the class?

39. How does my child get along with peers of other races?

40. How does my child get along with you?

41. How does my child behave when working in a group? Alone?

42. What methods of discipline do you use in the class-room?

.../Cont'd

43. Do any activities seem to frustrate my child?

44. What are my child's unpleasant habits?

45. Does my child's self-impression match her or his achievement?

46. In what ways is my child working up to your expectations?

47. In what ways is my child not working up to your expectations?

48. What kind of homework help do you expect us to provide?

49. How much time should my child be spending on homework?

50. What suggestions do you have for us that would help our child?

51. Does my child seem to pay attention in class?

52. Does my child complete homework assignments on time?

Parent Signature ..... Teacher Signature .....

- Teachers need to do a thorough job of preparing for conferences; this includes a careful selection of the questions they address to parents.

- The questionnaire worksheet should be sent to parents about two weeks prior to the intended date of the conference and returned about one week prior to the conference.

- Careful consideration of questions parents have asked is important. Teachers should have in mind some specific suggestions for parents where a problem area is evident.

- During the actual conference both the teacher and parent may wish to take notes but the teacher should be responsible for recording the answers to questions that both parties have asked on the conference worksheet. The teacher should also be responsible for writing in the mutual agreed upon 'action plan', the specific steps that both the teacher and the parents will follow to address each problem or concern. A copy of the worksheet should be given to the parents.

- The teacher should explain that the conference worksheet will remain in the student's cumulative file until the child moves or graduates and that only teachers and other professionals who work directly with the child will have access to it.

- Both the teacher and the parents should sign the worksheet, to indicate that they have agreed to the concerns which have been raised and that they are each bound to follow through with specific tasks planned for the benefit of the child.

- In later conferences the same worksheet may be used to indicate the progress made since the last meeting and whatever additional information may be warranted. As before, the parents should receive a copy of the signed worksheet.

There are several advantages to the conference approach I am proposing.

- Because both parties know the agenda in advance, they have time to reflect on the kind of information requested.

- For many parents and teachers, a planned agenda reduces anxiety about what to expect.

- A predetermined agenda keeps both parties on track. Sometimes parents and teachers fall into irrelevant conversation because they lack this kind of guide.

- The agenda scope is purposely broad. Because it deals with both academic and non-academic issues - the whole child - it makes the conference more person-oriented than problem-oriented.

- Teachers and parents can better share accountability when each knows what is expected of the child in the other setting.

- Each gifted program can keep records indicating the questions which are most prominent at each age level. This information can be used in planning parent education as well as inservice training for teachers.

- Cumulative records of parents' and teachers' questions regarding individual gifted children can identify continuing concerns through the grades.

- The present system of record-keeping in schools emphasises only student achievement. There should also be a continuous record of home-school relations to keep track of the collaboration and to provide the child's new teachers with access to the insights of previous teachers (Strom and Bernard, 1982).

PEER EXPECTATIONS

Cultural Changes in Learning

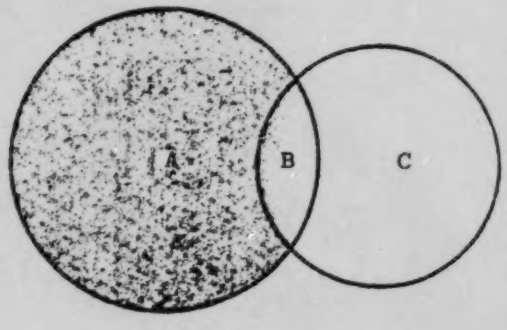
Today we are witnessing one of the most significant changes ever to occur in the way children learn. In the past there was a much slower rate of technological and cultural change - a situation that still prevails in cultures less technologically advanced than our own. In such cultures young people learn mostly from adults (see figure on following page). Because the world the children grow up in is not dramatically different from their elders', it makes sense for parents to say 'Let us tell you what to expect in life. We'll give you the benefit of our experience. Now, when we were your age ...'. This advice becomes less credible as the pace of change quickens and young people's experiences begin to diverge significantly from those of their parents and other adults. Rapid cultural change means more of children's experiences are foreign to the culture's adult members (see example on succeeding page). Thus, children today are having experiences that are unique in history to their age group. There may be some things we adults are too old to know simply because we are not growing-up now.

Because of the gap between the experience of adults and children, we are becoming a culture in which children and adults learn mostly from their peers. Even a casual observer of our age-stratified environment will note that

FIGURE

SOURCES OF LEARNING

Life in a past oriented society where the young learn mostly from adults



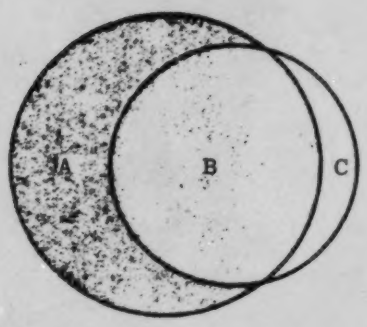
Key:

A - Adult experiences

B - Experiences shared by both adults and child

C - Child experiences

Life in a present oriented society where children and adults learn mostly from peers



Key:

A - Adult experiences

B - Experiences shared by both adults and child

C - Child experiences

1. Identify some experiences that are now a part of growing up but that were absent during your own childhood and adolescence. (Area C)

2. What are some things children learn at school now that were not part of your curriculum? (Area C)

3. Specify some family-shared experiences that have diminished during your lifetime. (Area B)

4. Suggest some ways for enlarging the scope of Area B.

children are turning more and more to one another for advice This shift in the source that boys and girls prefer to rely on for their guidance in learning has important implications for school practices, especially the way in which programs are determined and instruction is provided. Some educators believe that one of the most needed innovations in the schools is the responsible involvement of pupils on behalf of their class-mates.

Benefits of Peer Instruction

Although most tutoring programs are intended to help boys and girls who score below grade level, high achievers can also benefit from peer influence. Torrance (1978a) identified a significant issue while working with 1700 gifted students who had been selected to participate in the International Scholastic Future-Oriented Problem Solving Bowl. Thirty per cent of these talented and successful students, representing all grade levels, admitted they were not very good at working with groups and in teams. Consequently, a deliberate effort was made to help these students develop the team-work skills they would need for learning together and succeeding in the competitions.

Some interesting results emerged from the students' evaluations of the program. Ninety-eight per cent of them rated 'learning from peers' as one of the most exciting aspects of the program; this was a much higher proportion than those citing 'learning from teachers'. In a follow-up study a year later, 96 per cent of the students indicated that they were still in contact with peers from other places whom they had met during the program. The study also determined that the gifted students had shared some of the skills learned during the Bowl competition when they returned home. These skills included Delphi methods, trend extrapolation, construction of scenarios, cross-impact matrices, relevance trees, and simulation. Of the students, 74 per cent reported that they taught some of these skills to their peers; 66 per cent of the teachers who had nominated them to participate were able to verify this claim. Even more significant was the report that 81 per cent had taught their class-room teachers or adult leaders some new skill or technique related to futurism, a claim that 25 per cent of the nominating teachers were able to confirm. In regard to this last result, Torrance suggests that the practice of gifted students helping teachers learn should become more common: 'This may be the only way teachers can learn some things about the future. As the pace of cultural change accelerates, people recognise that the younger members of society have absorbed the latest aspects of the culture and are in closer contact than adults with the future' (Torrance, 1978a, p.84).

In addition to learning from one another, the gifted can also gain by tutoring less talented class-mates. Teachers of all grade levels want to know how to help students develop a sense of responsibility towards others, and how to balance the competitive orientation at school with experiences in co-operative tasks. Peer teaching typically results in the achievement of all of these objectives and more. It enables the tutor to develop attitudes and interpersonal skills that can be used throughout life to get along well with others. There is also an improvement in the tutor's academic performance. These benefits generally obtain whether the tutor is gifted, an average student, or low achiever.

More than any other activity at school, peer teaching involves students in responsible tasks on behalf of others. This maturity benefit appeals to an increasing number of parents who can see the dangers of teaching their children to become self-centred. They realise that there are many adults whose training and income qualify them as successful but whose lack of concern for others label them as failures. The fact that more employees in business, industry and education fail because of interpersonal relations problems than because of job incompetence underscores the need for schools and the family to facilitate the emotional and interpersonal aspects of growing-up. By becoming tutors, the gifted get to practise valuable human relations skills and learn to define success in terms of others' goals as well as their own.

Developing Peer Esteem

Life is not the same now as it was when Terman (1927) studied gifted children (Goleman, 1980). For a more contemporary profile of the gifted, we turn to research by UCLA by Tidwell (1980). Nearly 1600 high school students representing the upper 2 per cent of their 10th grade classes in Los Angeles were interviewed and administered a number of instruments. As a group the students had high self-concept scores, felt in control of their lives, viewed school in a positive way and shared the typical child's schedule in terms of time spent on studying and social activity. However, while 74 per cent of the group considered themselves happy, 64 per cent also viewed themselves as unpopular or very unpopular. The apparent lack of correlation between popularity and happiness would seem to indicate that for this group of gifted children, feelings of happiness are not contingent upon the approval or validation received from others. A plausible explanation would be that because of their superior mental abilities, these students receive enough success experience and reward so that they are not dependent on applause from peers.

On the other hand, I see no good reason to suppose that being valued by peers is a condition gifted children should have to forfeit. The fact is that in a democratic society being

popular plays a significant role in the selection of leaders. More gifted students could experience greater peer esteem if their role at school included some responsibility for helping other people. The public is inclined to doubt the efficacy of leadership programs which exclude candidates from demonstrating any commitment to the well-being of the general population. On a personal level, my eldest son recently completed a high school program for gifted students in science and math. Besides calculus, chemistry, physics and biology, Steve's schedule also included reading to the blind and tutoring disadvantaged children. As a parent I am grateful for the combined result of academic competence and personal development.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

The Early Environment

Parents are usually the first to detect a child's extraordinary ability. This discovery is often followed by a resolve to provide the richest possible pre-school experience. In trying to determine which childhood activities deserve priority, it is wise to consider what is known about highly creative adults. At the University of California, psychologists have studied 600 mathematicians, architects, engineers, writers and research scientists (MacKinnon, 1978). All of these people were nominated by experts in their field as being highly creative. It seems that, in addition to being very imaginative, most prefer solitary activities; they are able to concentrate for extended periods of time; and they exhibit an unusual level of task persistence. But how did they get to be this way? An examination of their autobiographical narratives reveals that they were either the eldest child or distantly spaced from brothers and sisters; they spent more time alone and with adults than did their peers and they learned at an early age to enjoy the company of their own imagination.

Certainly the privacy most creative adults experienced during childhood is at least suggestive of the early environment parents should strive to arrange. Unlike learning to be with age mates, a socialisation skill that can be acquired after starting school, learning to be alone will probably begin at home or not at all. Bear in mind that as more mothers join the labour market, children find themselves in day-care and pre-school settings where they are typically denied opportunities for solitude. Obviously the number of children in a class and the frequency of interruption makes solitary play a low priority activity at school. Moreover, once the elementary school years begin, organised groups such as cub scouts and little league are available, with other peer pressures to spend less time alone. Some of these group experiences can offer a child much and they should be

encouraged. At the same time, however, parents should help children arrange a schedule that continues to allow ample opportunity for solitude each day.

In addition to time for solitary activity, gifted boys and girls also need time to be with their parents. Recent studies of adults as play partners have led to new knowledge about the parent-child relationship, especially those factors which inhibit and support instruction and satisfaction. Parents have always felt an obligation to read to pre-schoolers or listen to them read, but now participation in fantasy play is considered another aspect of the responsibility. A growing realisation is that the benefits of parent-child play are different from those offered by solitary play or peer play. In particular, techniques have been designed which enable parents to help children develop language competence, values, creativity, memory and problem solving skills. Besides these academic gains that parents can assess with pre-post testing materials, the results include mutual enjoyment and affective growth in the family relationship (Strom, 1981a).

Maintaining Family Communication

Whether the teaching efforts of parents continue beyond the beginning grades depends on their level of self-confidence. Unless they feel capable of providing a learning environment at home, mothers and fathers may withdraw from teaching and expect surrogates to become primarily responsible for child rearing. When this attitude is taken, gifted children lose a potentially valuable source of influence. In addition, because boys and girls look up mostly to those who help them grow, adapt and feel capable, non-teaching parents forfeit the respect they desire. Although some educators may view this situation as inevitable, I do not. There is abundant evidence to indicate that by itself academic learning is insufficient for success in life. By defining the scope of non-academic instruction at each grade level, we can improve education, strengthen the family and establish a proper division of accountability between home and school.

Certainly the identification of gifted children is not enough to ensure their involvement and success in special programs. Sometimes parents have misgivings about the merits of acceleration so they refuse to permit a child's participation. Perhaps the reluctance is based on fear that the program will adversely modify relationships within the family or shorten the period of parental influence. Others believe that labelling will cause their child to develop an inflated self-image which can interfere with personal relationships throughout life. Some mothers and fathers want their children to be well thought of and believe that gifted classes may take away from time with age mates, the proper group with whom children

should first learn to relate. There are also parents who, having experienced too much pressure for hurry in their lives, want their children to have time to grow-up (Fisher, 1981).

A general concern is expressed about coping with the feelings of isolation and aloneness which come as parents lose the age or grade level reference on which they rely in setting expectations for children and themselves. In effect, the child is eight but at the same time, in some ways, he is also fifteen. Here we should bear in mind that, for most people, to be without a normative reference is to be alone in the worst sense because one has no criteria by which to evaluate the worthwhileness of one's efforts. Parent education is the key. When parents of the gifted meet regularly with other families in similar circumstances, their feelings of aloneness decline and the revised goals are drawn from a more relevant reference group. Such parents are also more likely to develop the guidance skills and self-confidence they need to maximise their child's development. Together these impressions reinforce the case for long-term parent programs designed to honour the educational goals of families as well as the school (Strom, 1978; Hackney, 1981).

Advice and Guidance

Parents are a child's only long-term continuous source of guidance. Yet, over the years they have been criticised for offering poor advice and simultaneously denied access to the school records of their children. In 1974, the Family Rights and Privacy Act was passed by Congress. This legislation confirmed that mothers and fathers have the right to know whatever the school knows about a child's abilities, performance and problems. By providing parents with objective and reliable information about the student's achievement, the school acknowledges the home as a significant source of child guidance. Informed parents are more able to share accountability and co-operate with the schools in helping youngsters plan for the future. Then too, the availability of relevant information permits parents of teenagers to serve the guidance role that most of them prefer.

The guidance potential of parents is confirmed by studies indicating that students of all ability levels take family advice far more seriously than educators have supposed. In the National Gallup Youth Survey (1981), teenagers indicated by a four to one margin that they would turn to parents rather than close friends or others for help in making important decisions. Millard's (1978) study called upon high school seniors to tell how important select persons were in helping them formulate post-graduation plans. The influence of teachers, parents, counsellors, friends and relatives were assessed. The results show that regardless

of what students planned to do following graduation from high school, the seniors rated parents as the single most important influence in helping them reach their decision.

It seems clear that parents should become more involved than they now are in career education and vocational planning. Besides sharing certain of the occupational orientation sessions, families could also benefit from the dialogue which would flow from structured questions prepared by the school. For each potential vocation the questions could invite child and parent to share their impressions about stresses and satisfactions, social significance of the job, mobility considerations, opportunities for continued learning and promotion, amount of required preparation and criteria in selecting a training institution. The emerging emphasis on a parent-teacher-child partnership seems the best means to improve career selection.

SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

Access to Opportunity

Public support of gifted education has been increasing for nearly a decade. During this time annual funding by the States(*) grew from $15m to more than $120m. Concurrently the proportion of gifted students being served by schools has risen from 4 per cent to 35 per cent. Similar gains have taken place in the Federal Government. When the Gifted and Talented Children's Act was passed in 1978 Congress authorised an escalating budget, starting with $2.5m in the first year and rising to $50m by 1983 (Remley, 1981). There is reason to believe that even greater economic assistance will be forthcoming if there is understanding of the basis of current public approval and the conditions which are necessary to sustain it.

First, the definition of who is gifted or talented must include an equitable representation of minorities and those who live in poverty. The wisdom of this requirement is confirmed by events of the recent past. A number of school boards, beginning with New York City, decided that it was discriminatory to continue the use of group IQ appraisals. The critics predicted that without intelligence tests as a guide many incapable students would be advised to attend college and the failure rate in higher education would soar. But these outcomes did not materialise. Instead the nationwide Upward Bound Program, designed to prepare inner-city school juniors and seniors for college, was successful. The minority admissions plan for universities and its related tutoring service flourished. All these efforts had a low rate of attrition.

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* These figures refer to the United States of America

It seemed that a new equation for how to succeed was in order. Unlike the past, when only IQ was thought to predict accomplishment, the new circumstances suggested that for persons within the normal range of intelligence, opportunity also predicts success. Middle-class parents took note of how well minorities were doing in college and promptly revised their own expectations. Before long the general view emerged that most people rather than just a few are capable of completing college and should be given the chance to do so. This perception of higher education as a right rather than a privilege soon became pervasive. As a consequence, between the mid-1960s and 1980, college enrolment in the United States tripled, from 4 million to 12 million students. Currently about 60 per cent of all high school graduates attend college (Strom and Bernard, 1982).

The present view is that every segment of society deserves access to opportunity. It follows that the indicators we use to assess potential must enable us to honour our democratic purposes. Otherwise the influence of test results in guiding educational decisions will decline (Strom, 1981b, 1981c, 1981d). This was precisely the case several months ago when Chicago's Board of Education decided to stop using IQ tests as a basis for placing students in classes of educable mentally retarded. Of the nearly 11,000 students in Chicago's EMR classes, 80 per cent are black; two-thirds of all students in the special education program are black. According to the board, 'Such a condition suggests potential bias in testing, assessment and policies or their implementation... Assessment should not result in disproportionate numbers of minority students being placed in special education classes, where they often continue throughout their school careers' (*Report*, 1981).

A different situation obtains in gifted education where minority groups are under-represented. Unless the school corrects this bias, society's goals of equality cannot be achieved. Therefore, when the traditional indices used to determine giftedness fail to identify an equitable proportion of persons from minority groups, there is a need to rely on additional criteria for selection. This is what takes place now in school districts serving various minority groups. Instead of limiting program admission to persons scoring in the top 2 per cent of an intelligence or achievement measure, ethnic or local norms are applied and the selection range is extended to include the top 5 to 10 per cent (Goldberg, 1981; Mossenson, 1981).

The Range of Talent

Besides serving all income and ethnic groups, gifted programs must also expand to nurture a broader range of talent. Although we do not know just how much of a person's potential goes undetected by intelligence tests, the available evidence

suggests it must be considerable. This was apparent in a study by Guilford (1977), during which scientists were presented with a list of twenty-eight functions of the mind and requested to rank order them in terms of relevance for successful work in the physical sciences. All but one of the traditional intelligence tests factors ranked below twentieth on the list; that is, nineteen out of the twenty characteristics considered by scientists most important on the job were not included on the traditional IQ tests. The need for broader testing is reinforced by Harold Lyon (1981), Director of the Office of Gifted and Talented. He indicates that the effect of considering only those persons with an IQ of 130 or above as gifted would result in overlooking 70 per cent of the creative and talented. Consequently, the definition of gifted and talented has enlarged to subsume five categories:

1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative and productive thinking
4. Visual and performing arts
5. Leadership ability.

The search for pupils who qualify in each of these categories is causing educators to look beyond traditional procedures. For example, a two-step process facilitates the identification and placement of youngsters who are precocious in various academic areas. First, a rough guide to who is gifted derives from results on an age-appropriate achievement test for some particular talent, such as mathematical or verbal reasoning ability. Children who score in the 96th percentile or better are then given tests designed for older youth such as the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Tests. This second screen spreads out the tight cluster at the ceiling of age-appropriate tests and enables guidance into an appropriate enrichment or accelerated curriculum (Cohn, 1981). The use of learning style inventories is another means for detecting previously unrecognised strengths. Some of these inventories reflect the work of Roger Sperry, who won the 1981 Nobel Prize in Medicine for his research on the split brain. Because differences in pupil potentials are influenced by whether the right or left hemisphere of the brain dominates, Torrance's (1978b, 1980a, 1981) tests, especially 'Your Style of Thinking and Learning' deserve consideration. This instrument confronts subjects with:

(a) problems of a sequential logical linear nature that depend on left-hemisphere functions; and

(b) problems calling for adaptation, intuition and innovation which are right-hemisphere functions.

Some problems in the test call for integration of the two sets of functions.

Sources of Identification

More sources of perception are being considered in determining who is gifted. An emerging practice is to augment the value of tests by inviting subjective nominations as well. This shift is especially relevant for the performing arts, creativity and leadership categories. It has been obvious for a long time that expert judges in the performing arts can detect talent which is overlooked by the school. Indeed children talented in art, music or drama have traditionally had to seek their instruction outside the school. Similarly, youngsters who are creative or who show leadership (even in negative ways like a gang leader or con artist) are more likely to be noticed by a source outside the school - parents. It is disappointing that so many educators are perplexed about how to identify students who fit the leadership category when the most often stated purpose of gifted programs is to yield leadership (Torrance, 1980b; Szekely, 1981).

Parent nominations closely correlate with success in gifted programs. Hopefully, the low reliability of teacher nominations will improve as colleges better prepare candidates for the class-room. When children are asked to identify their outstanding peers, the observations are quite accurate. Even more reliable are the gifted themselves, who can tell which peers share their characteristics and belong in the program. There is also the occasional self-nomination, a person not recruited by others but capable and motivated. In combination these sources can help schools identify more students who ought to be in gifted programs (Roedell, 1980).

SUMMARY

- Programs which emphasise learning to set goals help gifted students determine their own direction. Elementary and high school youngsters can develop and practise up-to-date research skills better if they have access to a university library and computer facility. By co-ordinating homework assignments with the aid of a computer, faculties can minimise undue stress in favour of mental health.

- Teacher training should include a practicum experience in getting to know and appreciate the gifted and talented. Prospective educators need an understanding of how to design curriculum. Learning to conduct conferences with parents is another essential skill.

- High achieving students value one another as a source of cognitive learning. They gain in a different way from tutoring persons who are less capable than themselves. It seems likely that the gifted could experience greater

peer esteem and more frequently be chosen as leaders if their school programs required some regular demonstration of a commitment to others.

- Parents can enrich early childhood by providing a daily opportunity for solitude and playful interaction with themselves. Learning how to combine instruction and friendly dialogue can establish mothers and fathers of elementary children as a source of lasting guidance. At the high school level they should become more involved in career education and vocational planning. The evaluation of any gifted program should include parent education components.

- Finally, the future of gifted education depends on who is invited to participate. In order to fulfil our democratic purposes, there must be an equitable proportion of minorities and the poor. In order to respect our diverse potential, a wide range of talent must qualify for support. In order to honour our collective perception, the sources we rely on for identifying gifted students must broaden. If educators will implement these conditions, they can expect the approval and support of a grateful society.

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REPORT OF CURRICULUM - GROUP 1

ASSUMPTION 1

'Talents' and 'gifts' emerge and develop through appropriate opportunities and experiences.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

1.1 Need to identify and foster special interests and abilities.

2 Need to provide opportunities for all children to work with other students with similar interests and abilities on appropriate activities/content.

3 Need for awareness of the wide range of gifts, talents and interests.

4 Programs should seek to develop the wide range of talents through many curriculum areas.

5 Permanent separation of students into fixed groups on the basis of identified talents/gifts is not desirable.

6 Schools need to adopt flexible grouping patterns for their students.

7 Identification of talented/gifted students to join flexible groups should be based upon a wide range of procedures.

8 A variety of talents and gifts (not only academic) is equally valued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Commonwealth Schools Commission should produce and disseminate a set of information pamphlets to assist schools and systems on such matters as:

- the range of procedures that can be used to identify children with special talents and gifts;
- the development of special curricula/programs for gifted and talented children;
- the positive and negative aspects of special grouping.

ASSUMPTION 2

Wider ranges of curriculum options for all students are more likely to identify and develop talents and gifts.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

2.1 All students should have access to a broadly-based curriculum.

2 Learning opportunities should transcend constraints of levels, subject areas and of traditional resources (human and material), and cognisance should be taken of the range of resources beyond the school.

3 Personal/social development should not be neglected.

4 Children should be provided with adequate bases for decision-making.

5 Children need to *learn* to make decisions when presented with a range of options.

6 All students should have the opportunity to speculate, experiment, and take risks, all of which might involve experiencing success and/or failure.

7 Students should be provided with opportunity to develop critical self-awareness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Advisory Group should examine the work of the Commission in relation to the School and the Community, with a view to identifying non-school resources which may be used in the provision of special programs for talented and gifted children.

2 The Advisory Group should support the proposals in both the Choice and Diversity Project and the *Schooling for 15 and 16 Year Olds* Report in relation to the relaxation of rigid school structures.

3 The Advisory Group should consider and publish work on:

. school and system level curriculum evaluation; and

. the development of comprehensive student profiles.

ASSUMPTION 3

To accommodate the individual differences which exist in all classrooms, consideration needs to be given to the many aspects or dimensions of individualisation.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Teachers can promote individualisation through variations in, for example:

- pacing and sequencing;
- venue (e.g. classroom, community, museum, home, computer);
- attendance;
- content;
- resource use/learning modes;
- breadth/depth;
- recognition of the worth of individual differences;
- student contract;
- taking account of individual experiences/background.

2 A program should take account of the individual's background and experience.

3 Negotiations between parents, students and teachers should take place unless considered inappropriate.

4 Student contracts are useful forms of individualising curriculum.

5 Teachers, schools and systems must be aware of the ways in which they can provide for individual differences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Commission should provide information and guidance to schools and systems on aspects of individualisation of curricula/programs for gifted and talented children such as:

- pacing and sequencing;
- venue (e.g. classroom, community, museum, home, computer);
- attendance;
- resource use/learning modes;

- breadth/depth;
- recognition of the worth of individual differences;
- student contract;
- taking account of individual experiences/background.

2 The Commission should review the Basket of Services with a view to supporting the capacity of all schools to individualise programs to assist gifted and talented children.

ASSUMPTION 4

Student selection of goals (or identification with goals selected for them) is necessary for effective learning, and as a consequence, for the optimum development of talents and gifts.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Participation in goal selection increases motivation of students.

2 Curriculum opportunities for all children should result from negotiation and sensitive dialogue between teachers and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Commission should prepare and publish guidelines on individual participation in goal selection and planning of curriculum/programs.

ASSUMPTION 5

Schools should provide parents with opportunities to negotiate their participation in various aspects of the curriculum.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Parents should be provided with regular opportunities to review the progress of their children.

2 Development of curriculum options for the talented/gifted should include negotiations with parents of the students concerned.

3 Parents should be provided with comprehensive information about the curricula in which their children participate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Advisory Group should review the work done by the School and Community Project concerning parent participation with a view to advising schools on means of involving parents in special programs for gifted and talented children.

2 The Advisory Group should advise schools on means of developing parent awareness of:

- the content of;
- the goals of; and
- the means of access to

programs for gifted and talented children.

ASSUMPTION 6

The curriculum should make adequate provision for common experiences and the development of essential skills and understandings.

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A curriculum should contain a blend of social/group experiences and individual experiences.

2 Consideration should be given to the notion of core curriculum.

3 Provision should be made for horizontal and vertical extension beyond the skills and understandings considered essential for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Advisory Group should provide schools with information about the various approaches to core curriculum and advice on the ways in which the curriculum for gifted and talented children can relate to a core.

2 The Advisory Group should consider curricula for gifted and talented children within the mainstream of general curriculum development.

REPORT OF CURRICULUM - GROUP 2

CURRICULUM ISSUES IN THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

Recommendation to the Commonwealth Schools Commission

In thinking about the development of curricula for children who have special interests, talents and motivations, the following should be regarded as essential commitment to the pursuit of excellence in the school system.

NATURE OF CURRICULUM - ASSUMPTIONS

1. At any particular time in any school there is a changing group of students who, for reasons of motivation and excellence of performance, need support and opportunities for the development of their talents.

2. Curriculum guidelines provided by or for systems, in principle, allow for individual differences; therefore provision for the gifted can be made within the mainstream.

3. Curriculum guidelines at system level and organisation along subject lines may/can be interpreted with sufficient flexibility to provide for a wide range of abilities and talents.

4. Opportunities for excellence can be fostered in the mainstream curriculum.

5. Teachers are the key agents in curriculum implementation.

6. Teachers have the attitudes and expectations vital to the provision of opportunities for gifted and talented children.

7. Teachers require a wide range of support services to effectively meet individual differences and needs, including management of home-school relations, career guidance and personal counselling.

8. Parents have an integral sharing role to play in the negotiation of placement and program development.

9. Resources for the development of talent should be seen as part of the general funding for schools.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. A responsive environment is necessary to recognise and foster special interests, talents and motivations in children and to permit the negotiation of appropriate programs for them.

2. Conditions for that responsive environment are:

   . teachers' awareness, competence and skills

   . teacher time

   . flexible curriculum structure

   . support resources, both system provided and community activated

   . parent involvement in the exchange of information; and

   . program continuity.

3. To operate that responsive environment the following are necessary:

   . the organisation of content into areas of knowledge which also allow for a range of options in breadth, depth and in the rate of progress and style of learning

   . learning roles and processes which embody the receiving of knowledge; the remaking of knowledge; and the making of knowledge. This will necessitate the development of both convergent and divergent thinking skills, research skills including the skills of inquiry, problem solving and seeking, and independent learning skills

   . the organisation of the learning environment must allow for flexible structures to meet needs with the available resources through the negotiation of options, including for example:

      - fluid grading
      - cluster grouping
      - mentors
      - contract learning
      - extra-school opportunities (for example camps, vacation classes)
      - use of community resources, including universities and TAFE etc.

The consequence of these arrangements will be a negotiable and flexible use of time

- the facilitating of the program will include the need for a program co-ordinator and the systematic documentation and review of all student profiles and performances.

4. There will be a diversity of expected outcomes which will include:

   (a) the development of personal qualities, for example:

   - independent goal setting
   - commitment
   - a sense of worth in self and others;

   (b) productive orientation represented by life choices and talented behaviour as transmitters of knowledge, performers and original makers;

   (c) the enrichment of the school community life for the benefit of all.

5. Evaluation is seen as an integral part of any program and must seek to determine the developmental achievements of the children and provide evidence of the appropriateness of the program. Participants in this evaluation should include students, teachers, parents and external observers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING

1. Publication and wide public distribution of the guidelines.

2. Funding for case study program exemplars.

3. Opportunities for inservice education for teachers to experiment with curriculum in this area.

4. In association with other Commonwealth Schools Commission initiatives, in particular the Professional Development of Principals Project and the Choice and Diversity Project, extend the understanding of principals and other school-related groups of the requirement to undertake curricular development.

REPORT OF RESEARCH GROUP

RESEARCH ISSUES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

In specifying one classification of research, the group was also aware that there were many ways of looking at the problem. In listing specific research studies, the group was aware that there were many others which, given time, it could think of and certainly other persons could think of. The grouping and the list are not seen as absolute but rather as a sample of what could or should be done.

INTRODUCTION

Responsibility to provide educational programs for disabled children, even the most severely disabled, is now accepted by governments, education authorities and the community at large. If educational provision is to meet the needs of all members of society, responsibility to provide programs for gifted and talented children must also gain a similar general acceptance. In other words, the educational spectrum must be complete. There is evidence of some acceptance of a responsibility to take initiatives in the education of gifted and talented children. However, the extent and nature of this acceptance is not known. To rectify this deficiency, and to discover ways of fulfilling educational responsibility to gifted and talented children, requires research.

The recent groundswell of interest in the needs of gifted and talented children 'has been characterised by experimentation and eclecticism' (Mossenson, 1981) but is being acted upon by teachers, parents and educational planners as if there is a great fund of hard empirical data on the subject in this country. The paucity of Australian research and the absence of any real attempt to harness and interpret overseas research data on this recent initiative means that hypotheses are being stated and programs are being developed within a data base vacuum.

The fact that two Curriculum discussion groups were anticipated by the Advisory Group and were filled by an excess of demand by participants to 'get on with the job', is an indication of the pressure being applied from parents and educational planners on school communities to provide immediate programs. These programs are being developed and in some cases tested without any legitimate Australian

research basis. If the best informed decisions are to be made in the conception and implementation of programs for gifted and talented students, the parlous research situation needs to be developed through dynamic and well-funded immediate, medium-term and long-term research projects.

WHY ARE WE EDUCATING GIFTED STUDENTS?

Equal opportunity should be provided for those who are gifted, in the same way that the mainstream of children is presented with educational challenges. Currently the gifted are disadvantaged.

Students should be able to realise their full potential not only because failure to do so is an individual loss, but also because it is a corporate national deficit.

The identification and development of the gifted, and particularly those among the socially disadvantaged, is a combined responsibility. Comprehensive education is found to be inadequate for this task currently, and yet we should educate the gifted to their potential.

Schools are to assist children's development and meet the needs of society. The gifted are part of this spectrum.

We need to develop 'master craftsmen', socially well adjusted, joyful people who can experience individually appropriate programs.

We need to correct the imbalance of educating for mediocrity, and of cutting down the tall poppies. Gifted children have something intrinsic to their talent/gift to offer.

Summary

1. All children are entitled to be developed fully.

2. Gifted children are not fully developed currently. They are possibly hindered.

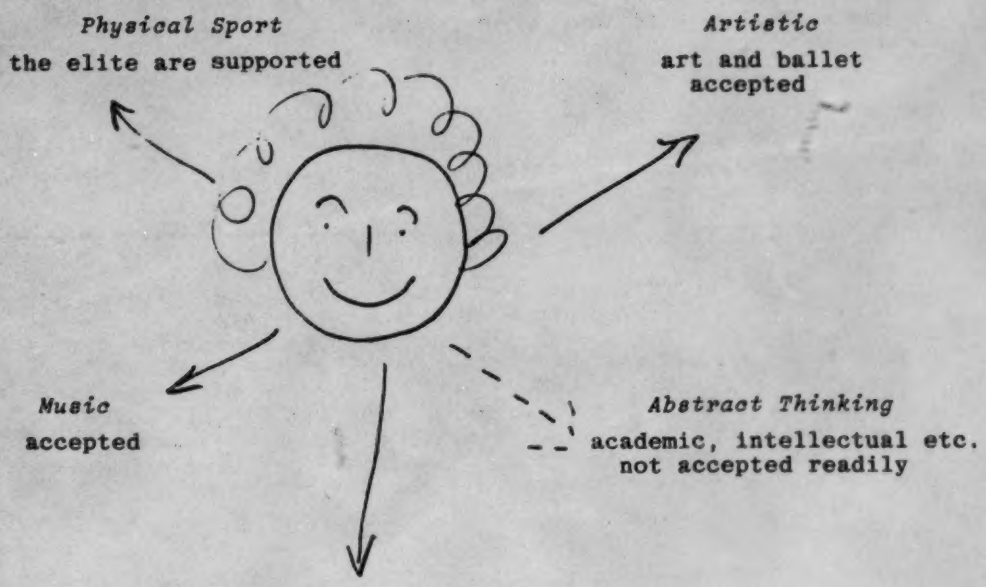
3. There is a gap in the provisions in education's 'geographical map' or spectrum of children notably, the slow learner../the typical../and the *children with high potential*.

4. The rationalisation of the need to educate the gifted has two thrusts. For the individual it is to complete his own development. For society as a whole it maximises the materials/resources (people) of that society with input from all levels in a democracy.

5. Maximising should apply to *all* children from *all* backgrounds.

FIGURE

ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTEDNESS



TYPES OF RESEARCH

In the absence of valid and appropriate Australian research on education programs for talented and gifted students, the following types of research are suggested.

These proposals for research are not research designs nor necessarily phrased as absolute research questions. They are topics in which research is needed but each will need clarifying and recasting into research format.

Some studies have both intrinsic merit and potential impact in creating a more positive climate towards education of gifted and talented children. These are identified as having 'climate' potential.

A national register of practitioners and researchers working in the area of gifted and talented programs for students needs to be compiled.

IMMEDIATE RESEARCH STUDIES

It is anticipated that the results of immediate research would be available within twelve months.

1. Annotated Bibliography of Research

A series of publications which contain surveys and critical reviews of areas of literature describing the 'state of the game' is needed. This documentation would be re-written for a variety of reader audiences, i.e. parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers and as a P.R. exercise to inform the media in the form of press releases. The aim of this series of publications is to inform, demystify, break down prejudices and assist in creating a favourable positive climate for the acceptance of the programs for the gifted.

2. Surveys

Surveys of good practice in the field should be undertaken as these will facilitate evaluation of the programs.

3. Selected Studies

Some topics have been selected for study which require a relatively short-term commitment of resources and which may have some political and educational policy-making impact (i.e. 'climate' projects).

(a) What is the occurrence of gifted and talented child drop-outs in school programs?

(b) What do gifted children say are their preferred learning modes? What helps and hinders their learning? What school experiences have been beneficial?

(c) Parents should be involved in the discussion of issues concerning gifted and talented children:

- how to cope with the gifted
- how to stimulate the gifted
- understanding the school program for, and problems with, the gifted child
- parental recognition of gifted children (identification issues).

4. Stereotyped Attitudes

Many of these attitudes are quite negative towards gifted and talented children and their education. Evidence is needed to counter these opinions, which include:

(a) that they learn anyway

(b) that social maladjustment is produced by stretching them

(c) that elitism and snobbish attitudes are developed

(d) that they will be rejected by their peer group

(e) that genius students are mentally unstable (genius is akin to madness)

(f) that the development of the child's intellect estranges her from her social development which is less advanced.

MEDIUM-TERM RESEARCH STUDIES

'Medium' refers to research projects for which some results might reasonably be expected within two to three years.

These are not necessarily more or less important than longer-term studies, but are regarded as accessible with reasonable funding in the shorter-term.

In some cases, *parts* of the research questions and issues identified might profitably be studied on a medium-term time scale.

The Commonwealth Schools Commission should undertake studies in the following areas.

1. Seek out and evaluate current practices in Australian schools in the area of educating the gifted.

   - it is recognised that it is considerably easier to 'seek out' such practices than it is to 'evaluate' them, especially if 'evaluation' is interpreted

broadly. However, there is a felt need for disseminating information on the current Australian scene.

2. Survey the present state of opinions (on the appropriate educational provisions for gifted children) held by different groups in society, for example, the teaching profession.*

   . There are *impressions* on this question available, but a need for empirical evidence was expressed.

   How might these opinions be influenced?

   . This is recognised as a significantly more difficult question, and it is doubtful if medium-term research can readily address it adequately.

3. To what extent can foreign (i.e. non-Australian) research findings be translated to an Australian context and what factors are critical for the transfer process?

   . It was felt that a substantial amount of foreign research existed and, although a good proportion of it was regarded as dubious in quality, some of this might provide useful guidelines for Australian practice. However, the transfer issues are significant.

   . For this question, *some* medium-term progress might be anticipated, although longer-term studies are also needed.

   (Compare to proposal 1., in Long-term Research Studies below.)

4. What distinguishes the apparent social (un)acceptability of some forms of giftedness and not others?*

   . Why is it that, for example, sporting giftedness is both accepted and hallowed, but this seems less to be the case for intellectual giftedness?

5. What is happening now (and what is planned for the short-term) with respect to both *initial* and *inservice* teacher education in the education of gifted children? (...including teacher-initiated teacher education)*

   . It is recognised that the issues concerned with identifying and training teachers of the gifted are themselves research issues that are as yet unresolved. However current basic data on this question was regarded as 'politically relevant'.

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* 'Climate' potential. Refer to paragraph three under Types of Research, above.

6. What different learning strategies are appropriate for gifted and talented children? Do these have implications for educational practice?

7. Evaluate suggested provisions for the education of gifted pupils from several perspectives. For example:

   Such *provisions* currently include:

   - homogeneous grouping
   - special schools
   - enrichment
   - grade-skipping
   - advanced courses in schools, universities
   - independent study
   - university courses (part-time)
   - advanced placement type programs
   - early tertiary admission

     etc.

   There was felt to be a need for objective evidence rather than armchair opinions on some of these matters.

   Miriam Goldberg identifies some possible *criteria* for evaluating such provisions.

   Perspectives include:

   - Do they meet the *needs* of the students?
   - What *are* the needs?
   - How are they viewed by others?
   - What factors are crucial to their success?
   - Are there undesirable consequences associated with these?

     etc.

   (Compare to proposal 6., in Long-term Research Studies below.)

8. Do children identified by aptitude (rather than achievement) differ from those identified by achievement? For example in matters of:

   - opportunity differences
   - motivational differences
   - psychological/personality differences.

9. To what extent do 'gifted' children drop out of the educational system early? Why does this happen and what might be done about it? How does the situation compare with other children's reasons for dropping out?*

10. In short-term tasks, some gifted children learn *very* much faster than some of their classmates. Few studies have been done on whether this differential rate is maintained over long periods of time such as days, weeks, months and years. It has, potentially, major long-term impacts on curriculum development, for example compacting and stretching the same material over different time periods.

LONG-TERM RESEARCH STUDIES

Such research can be described as continuing/on-going/or longitudinal research. Results are unlikely before the fourth or later years.

1. To what extent can foreign (i.e. non-Australian) research findings be translated to the Australian scene? What (if any) factors are critical to this transfer? Replication of selected major/significant overseas studies in Australian contexts may be useful.

   (Compare to proposal 3., in Medium-term Research Studies, above.)

2. There should be a review of different identification procedures and their consequences, for example, those between general and specific giftedness; potential versus achievement methods; nomination contrasted with the use of standardised tests. This review would include the need to update the Australian norms and validity data for many of the psychological measures used in Australia.

3. Within lower socio-economic and minority groups, are those gifted and talented children, identified by potential (e.g. general ability), under-represented in equivalent achievement groups? If so, what should be done about it?*

4. Is giftedness simply the extreme part of an ability distribution or are there other psychological (or other) dimensions involved?

5. Longitudinal studies of groups of gifted and talented children should be undertaken. For example:

   (a) same area of giftedness but different selection procedures;

   (b) different areas of giftedness but same selection procedures;

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* 'Climate' potential

(c) different areas of giftedness with different selection procedures.

6. To evaluate various existing (or proposed) practices for developing gifted/talented pupils, for example the consequence of grade-skipping or acceleration; early tertiary admission; 'pull outs' for specific programs; homogeneous/heterogeneous grouping (bear in mind tertiary institutions' willingness to admit bright young students in their situation of falling numbers).

   (Compare to proposal 7., in Medium-term Research Studies, above.)

7. What are the organisational barriers to the implementation of existing/proposed programs for gifted/talented children? (For example, transition from primary to secondary levels or secondary to tertiary levels, also within school.)

8. What are the special problems of 'isolated' gifted/talented children (isolation for reasons of, for example geography, culture, or physical handicap),*

9. There should be studies of the issues facing parents of gifted/talented children. What is consistent over time (for example pre-school to tertiary) and what varies with developmental level.* For example:

   - how do they suspect their children are gifted/talented
   - what are the problems they will face
   - how they can/should cope
   - how they can help/enhance/stimulate their children
   - understand peer group problems
   - understand problems facing school.

10. Do the characteristics of the effective teacher of the gifted and talented differ from those of the teacher of other children?

EFFECTING THESE RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Posture

1. The Commonwealth Schools Commission should not wait for suggestions from the field.

2. It should seek submissions actively.

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* 'Climate' potential

3. It should commission reviews/projects,

4. It should encourage States to undertake mutually agreed specific projects on a joint funding basis,

We need empirical research which provides real answers to real problems.

Priorities

The balance between the three nominal research programs as well as between teacher survival and program relevance must be maintained. Because of these the time lapse between the research projects and the receipt of the information is critical.

Initially the weight of funding may be most appropriately placed on research identified as of 'immediate need', As immediate needs are met, the weight of funding should move to medium-term and long-term project finance,

Funding

The Commonwealth Schools Commission and others should explore all possible funding agencies, including private business. Commerce and business might be very interested in supporting programs for high achievers. For example, engineering or computing companies might well be interested in programs for high mathematics achievers. However private funding may have indirect implications which should be explored first.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As there is a paucity of research on the education of gifted and talented children, the Commonwealth Schools Commission should initiate a research program immediately.

2. A national register of practitioners and researchers working in the area of gifted and talented programs should be compiled.

3. We perceive a general priority to establish acceptance and legitimisation of gifted and talented programs in schools. Therefore we recommend priority for certain projects which we feel will contribute to a positive climate.

   (a) A set of critical reviews of existing research in specific sensitive areas associated with educating gifted and talented children, for example, relating to such concepts as produces 'snobs', social isolates, mental illhealth, peer rejection, elitism, 'they learn anyway', be documented; and that these be

subsequently rewritten for different audiences, for example teachers, parents, administrators, policy-makers, the media; and then be well disseminated,

(b) A selected group of research studies be initiated immediately because of their intrinsic worth *and* their positive contribution to a positive 'climate' for educating the gifted and talented. See for example proposals 2, 4, 5, 9 in the section on Medium-term Research Studies; and proposals 3, 8 and 9 in the section on Long-term Research Studies.

4. The Commonwealth Schools Commission should initiate a comprehensive research program to include immediate as well as medium-term and long-term studies. Initially the balance of support should be towards the immediate studies but should subsequently move to medium-term and long-term studies.

5. The Commonwealth Schools Commission should generate research on the education of gifted and talented by:

(a) The commissioning of specific research from specific centres and/or people.

(b) The definition of other research areas, and then by openly seeking submissions within these definitions.

(c) The identification of a limited number of research groups as centres of concentration in research on the gifted and talented. These centres should be assured of regular funds, used for regular commissions and be encouraged to make submissions to maintain continuity of research. However this should not be an exclusive use of research funds.

(d) Encouraging States and Territories to undertake specific research on gifted and talented children on a joint basis with the Commonwealth Schools Commission.

6. Development without evaluation is irresponsible.

(a) For approval for funding by the Commonwealth Schools Commission all curriculum/support service development programs should have an appropriate evaluation component built in.

REPORT OF SUPPORT SERVICES - GROUP 1

This working party on Support Services has examined the issues which bear upon a range of services which teachers, pupils, parents and administrators require in their attempts to provide variable, flexible organisational structures and management services and patterns on behalf of gifted and talented on a formal and informal basis.

From the documentation which follows, it appears that much of what must be done falls within the responsibility of schools and school systems. There are, however, activities which clearly require Australia-wide co-ordination and to some extent national support. The Commonwealth Schools Commission has a clear role in the establishment of a secretariat charged with that co-ordination and particularly in the areas of information services and networks. That focus is seen as singularly important at this stage in the development of national concern on behalf of the target groups.

In considering its advice to the Commission, this group urges the Advisory Group to give the establishment, oversight and support of information services and networks a high priority.

In addition, since the cross-cultural transposition of program evaluation has obvious and inherent dangers, the group urges the Commission to sponsor or commission Australian evaluative studies as a matter of urgency.

In the absence of precise and unequivocal policy statements by educational authorities, by systems and by schools regarding the nature, the purpose, the scope and the intention of programs for gifted and talented youngsters, considerations of curriculum, of support services and so on would seem to be of relative unimportance.

Short of evidence of durability and persistence in time which such policy assurances can give, it is unlikely that there will be effective and efficient leadership in those areas which impinge upon appropriate program developments for the target group. In other words, unless as a first step there is some real concern by our schools and systems and education authorities for the provision of clear and unequivocal policy statements concerning provision for gifted and talented children, all else will be a waste of time.

Support services are in part a response to economic necessity and the exercise of the economies of scale; in part a pragmatic response to the need to concentrate specialised expertise; and in part to provide a necessary focus for

system change to occur with a relatively high degree of internal coherence and consistency.

Programs for gifted and talented children provide a particularly valid rationale for the development of the existing services. One must be mindful however that, since the area is one of real and potential socio-political and professional tension, some care must be exercised in the terms of the scale.

It is the case that the more recent concerns of Australian education for comprehensiveness has resulted in the absence of clearly delineated structures and procedures geared specifically towards the identification and selection of intellectually talented children, and the same is probably true, although to a lesser degree, in the area of talent and giftedness in the performing and creative arts.

The importance of these tasks and the development of appropriate programs of concern cannot be overemphasised; and that importance indicates a task force approach to the resolution of the issues.

Support services for gifted and talented children should be focused upon a task force which has the responsibility to ensure that provision for the target group is:

(a) equitable and valid

(b) comprehensive and system-wide

(c) internally consistent and coherent

(d) qualitatively different and therefore appropriate to the needs, interests, potentials and aspirations of the children concerned

(e) capable of surviving after the departure of key personnel.

In considering the support services which are indicated for gifted and talented children, the working party had those basic principles very much in mind.

There are eleven elements of support services:

1. Information Services
2. Consultancy Services
3. Psychological Services
4. Curriculum Services
5. Parent Services
6. Evaluation

7. Teacher Preparation
8. Administrative Services
9. Interface Resolution
10. Resources
11. Network Services

INFORMATION SERVICES

1. Preliminary Statement

In educational initiatives of this kind there is a danger that misconceptions may well inhibit the development and durability of the program. It is therefore necessary that as much information about the nature of the program and its philosophical underpinning is provided to all those affected by the program, that is those in the program and those not.

2. Information Services to *PUPILS* will involve:

   (a) Understanding of the selection process

   (b) Why a particular student has been included in a particular program

   (c) The nature, purpose and scope of the program.

3. Information Services to *PARENTS* will involve:

   (a) Information to *pupils* as in 2 above

   (b) An understanding of the nature of the talent possessed by the child

   (c) The role that the parent can play in support

   (d) A knowledge of possible contacts who may assist in developing these understandings

   (e) How to treat such a child (for example sibling relationships)

   (f) The role of the school. Parents need to be aware of how the school is attempting to cater for the observed talent(s). This will be a continuing process.

4. Information Services to the *EDUCATION COMMUNITY* (including teachers)

   (a) Information to *pupils* as in 2 above

   (b) Information to *parents* as in 3(b), (c) and (d) above

   (c) An understanding of the comprehensive school system and some of the problems which might be posed in attempting to cater adequately for the talented child

(d) Knowledge of entry/exit procedures to schooling particularly in relation to interface situations (for example, Year 6 to Year 7 Primary to Secondary; Secondary to Tertiary)

(e) Knowledge of available resources both physical and human (within and outside school)

(f) Knowledge of current research data

(g) Knowledge of existing programs, their suitability and appropriateness

(h) Access to levels of communication on a two-way basis, for example to the centre; region; parents; community.

5. Information Services to the *COMMUNITY* (beyond the school)

(a) To other professional groups

(b) Utilisation of community resources (physical, human, financial) for example, the Shell Oil Co. supports music talent programs in Western Australia

(c) Creation of general community awareness of the educational and other needs of talented children, aimed at creating greater acceptance and support of programs for these students.

CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Preliminary Statement

Consultancy Services are designed to enhance the quality and range of programs for and on behalf of gifted children by utilising existing services and providing new ones (taking into account the personality and professional qualities expected of the consultant).

Target Groups

Teachers

. information, for example research data, publications, other programs in class-room situation e.g. programming

. out-of-class activities, for example inservice resources

. identification process

. alternative organisational methods

Parents

. directing parents to sources of assistance (resource, psychological etc.)

Administration

. expert advice on policy formation and implementation, including organisational structures.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Preliminary Statement

The quality of programs for gifted and talented children is directly related to the quality of psychological services which are provided.

Such services should include active participation in:

(a) the identification process

(b) placement of pupils in appropriate programs

(c) maintenance of appropriate social/emotional levels of development (for example self-esteem).

In this context, psychological services are also necessary in order that parent and teacher understanding of the program for such children is enhanced and encourages the belief that parents and teachers are active participants in the program.

Psychological services may be provided to the target groups from a variety of services, for example from existing Departmental and school resources; community related health services; or by the development of new interactive patterns of service.

The following table sets out a scheme for provision of psychological services to pupils, parents and teachers.

TABLE

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Target	Nature of Service	By Whom	In What Structure
Pupils	. Understanding of difference . Acceptance of variable performance . Understanding of significance of stereotypes, for example girls . Self-esteem . Social and emotional needs	A range of individuals could be involved, including educational psychologists, parents and teachers	. By referral . Teacher observation . Parent contact . Using individual and group approaches
Parents	. Understanding of the characteristics of talented children . Understanding of the nature and purpose of programs for talented children . Understanding of family dimensions of talented children	. Consultants . Teachers . Educational Psychologists . Administrators	Both within and through the school
Teachers	. Identification techniques . Understanding of needs and characteristics of talented children . Recognition that talented children do not always excell in all areas . Expectations involved in male/female stereotypes . Confidence in dealing with talented children	. Consultants . Colleagues . Educational Psychologists . Administrators	Within the educational system

CURRICULUM SERVICES

The development of diverse, wide-ranging curriculum material will provide resources for individual teachers to develop individual student programs to cater for a wide range of needs, interests, abilities and potentials.

PARENT PREPARATION

In any program for any student, the parent has a significant role in the provision of information to teachers, sharing experiences with other parents, providing support to the student and the school.

Parents need to be sensitised to the important role which they can play within the education of gifted and talented children.

The role of parent organisations should not be overlooked.

EVALUATION

Evaluation has two foci. One focus is the testing of programs for gifted and talented children in terms of

- legitimacy
- validity
- reliability

The other focus is that the evaluation material becomes a prime source for the material communicated by means of the information and network sources.

The group recognises the difficulties and problems associated with cross-cultural transposition and urges the replication and further development of evaluative studies, already undertaken in other cultural contexts, within the Australian educational community.

It is important to ensure that the attitude, value and belief systems of the Australian community may be relevantly matched with appropriate program design.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The success of such programs critically depends on the extent and quality of teacher preparation, both preservice and inservice.

There is a clear need for systematic teacher development work in addition to that which is provided by the consultancy service.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

There is a clear need for strong administrative support associated with variable, flexible and diverse school organisation, for example appropriate timetabling as a necessary condition for success.

INTERFACE RESOLUTION

The success of alternative and more diverse provisions for gifted and talented children depends on the introduction of flexibility in the breaks across critical chronological barriers in the present education system, for example early admission, primary/secondary, secondary/tertiary interfaces.

In addition there needs to be some resolution of the uncertainty of credits given when a student attends a tertiary institution as an early entry student.

The following table summarises the issues involved.

TABLE

INTERFACE RESOLUTION

Target	Nature	By Whom	Structure
Pupils	Flexibility of pupil movement in breaking down minimum age barriers	. State education authorities . Tertiary requirements . Registration boards, for example law, nursing, statutory boards, etc.	Acceptance of the concept by appropriate authorities to be followed by enforcement/ implementation
Parents	Information relating to the availability of such provisions	. State education authorities . Various associations, for example parental . Tertiary boards . Teachers, guidance personnel	By publication and hand-books, general advertisement, meetings, personal contact
Teachers	Information and guidance relating to the benefits to be derived for gifted and talented students	. State education authorities . Teachers associations (Industrial) . Subject associations . State curriculum committees . Trade unions and similar industrial organisations . Performing arts bodies and individuals	By publication and hand-books, general advertisement, meetings, personal contact

../Cont'd

Target	Nature	By Whom	Structure
Administrators	Information relating to implications of research, previous decisions to assist in decision-making process	Advisory groups	By publication and hand-books, general advertisement, meetings, personal contact

RESOURCES

Preliminary Statement

Notwithstanding the tensions which exist about the priorities in the allocation of scarce resources, it is the case that in the absence of specific resource provisions and the facility to maximise existing resources, programs for gifted and talented children are unlikely to proceed or persist in time.

Remote and isolated students need special care so that they are not overlooked. This may include the provision of accommodation and travel.

For instance, resources are necessary to manage programs:

(a) to ensure provision for appropriate curriculum materials;

(b) to harness physical and human resources in the community; and

(c) to provide staff for program management and implementation.

The following table summarises the appropriate disposition of resources.

TABLE

HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

Target	Nature of Service	By Whom	In What Structure
Pupils	. Human (c)* . Material (a)*(c)*	. School/Central administration . Program co-ordinator (c)* . Community . State organisations at State, regional or local level designed to cater for isolated children. Also Federal and State level financial assistance and local level provision	As broad as educational system will allow and also including use of organisations outside the education system
Parents	. Human (c)* (Counselling role) . Physical - provision (for example adequate funding)	. Other parents/ teachers/ educational psychologists/ administrators . Tertiary personnel . Central/*local* authorities	Within and through the school and original initiatives, for example setting up out-of-school activities by interested parent/ community groups
Education Community - including Teachers	. Human (c)* . Material (a)*	. Employing authorities . Community expertise . Consultancy services . Tertiary personnel	Teacher training and professional development

(a), (b) or (c) as in Preliminary Statement

NETWORK SERVICES

Preliminary Statement

The development and maintenance of any program for gifted and talented children depends on the development of some effective network organisation.

Such organisation may be formal, with the establishment of, for example, The Australian Association of Teachers and Administrators of Gifted Children's Programs, or on a less formal basis these networks could involve among other things:

. Communication structures, both formal and informal

. Clearing house operation - dividing up between States, who would assume responsibilities for gathering information, such as for example 'What is going on elsewhere?'

. Initially this could involve a national type network, which should be equally applicable at State and regional levels.

The following table summarises the nature of such a network.

TABLE

NETWORK SERVICES

Target	Nature	By Whom	Structure
Teachers	. Provision of relevant information (Participatory) . Communication of ideas/information/ different methods of organisation . Conferences . People involved in each State/region etc	. Commission secretariat - including national Advisory Group . Central co-ordination responsible for further dissemination to each State, National Council of Independent Schools secretariat and National Catholic Education Commission secretariat	Publications, for example newsletter, media conferences and regular meetings (visiting overseas speakers)
Parents	. Provision of relevant information, for example parent understanding . People involved, particularly at local levels	. Associations of parents in each State . Formation of a broadly based national association	Publications, for example newsletter, media conferences and regular meetings (visiting overseas speakers)
Administrators	Provision of information in order to assist in decision-making patterns	. National Associations of Teachers/ Administrators This is to be replicated at State and Regional level	Publications, for example newsletter, media conferences and regular meetings (visiting overseas speakers)

REPORT OF SUPPORT SERVICES - GROUP 2

INTRODUCTION

A framework for the discussion of support services can be developed from three major questions:

1. Support services for whom?
2. With regard to what?
3. Provided from where?

- Support services may be provided in the field of gifted and talented education for the gifted and talented *children* themselves, the *teachers* of the gifted and talented, and the *parents* of the gifted and talented.

- Support services may be provided with regard to:

  - *information* relevant to programs;
  - *structures* within which such programs are lodged;
  - *people* who mediate between and among parents, children and teachers;
  - *things* necessary for the operation of programs, such as buildings, materials, and so forth.

- Support services aiming to assist children, teachers and parents with regard to these needs may be provided by either *systems* of various kinds, or by *informal* or *voluntary* agencies. Both systematic and informal assistance may be provided in *central*, *regional* or *local* settings.

Given that kind of framework, it is possible to describe support services comprehensively, and to suggest possible priorities among them.

However, while the theoretical exercise may have some charm, it will be mere wind and vapour unless it has a foot in the real world of school, children, staff-room, mothers and fathers, universities and so on.

Where are we right now in that?

Certainly, there are programs for the gifted and talented in individual schools, particularly in Western Australia, supported by some additional teacher time, by some publications, by a burgeoning if limited enthusiasm. But, the

significant fact to note about this is that it has the nature of *ad hoc* endeavour.

In no system in Australia is a provision for the gifted and talented absolutely taken for granted in the same way as, for instance, it is taken for granted that all boys and girls will learn to write; or, at a different level, in the same way as it is taken for granted that visually impaired children require a special educational provision.

The *ad hoc* situation, the limited but burgeoning enthusiasm, needs, if education for the gifted and talented is to be anything more than a passing fad, another item on the band-wagon, to be translated into structures whose support will be guaranteed from financial period to financial period, and from government to government.

Centrally, and at a State level, for both government and non-government sectors, there needs clearly to be a statement of commitment, the description of policy, the provision of funds.

Policy statements by themselves are insufficient. If action is to be habitual and its support embedded, then policy must be followed by other documents, 'starters' for teachers and schools, addressing such questions as teaching methods, class organisation, acceleration, enrichment, curriculum design. Planning papers or manuals of suggestions for schools, subject area descriptions in attractive, loose-leaf formats, not subject to copyright, will be necessary.

Importantly, these must be home-grown and not adopted from other systems where different arrangements and relationships obtain, and where different values may be favoured. In particular, documents which are 'system-started-school-added' are required.

Similarly, support services for the education of the gifted, and indeed research curriculum, and teacher education, are likely to flourish if major political parties at both Federal and State level can be encouraged to incorporate a concern for the gifted and talented into their education platforms.

Full incorporation of policy and good practice will require consultation with and persuasion of key groups, especially regional directors, principals (through peer contact) and key decision-makers in policy and resource allocation. Advocates of provision for gifted and talented children should contact such groups, arrange exchange programs by including the topic in agendas of conferences for principals and regional personnel.

It is a delicate time. Perhaps further *ad hoc* action, experiment and trial, further talking and sharing of information are necessary before the policy position is formalised.

Timing is important, but equally time is running out. Funds must be earmarked before they evaporate in the heat of monetarist policies. The pursuit of policies and commitment is crucial. From the point of view of funding, it will be important to look to joint ventures among States, to the production of materials relevant to Australia as a whole and to co-operation between government and non-government sectors.

Not only are the description of policies and the legitimation of effort of importance; but, even within an *ad hoc* situation, a definite locus of effort should be nominated. Centrally, the Commonwealth Schools Commission has established the Advisory Group on Education of Gifted and Talented Students, and some funds have been earmarked within the Projects of National Significance program. Systemically, the picture is varied, Western Australia has established a Superintendent of the gifted and talented reporting to an Assistant Director-General. In New South Wales, an Assistant Director of Services has a concern for the gifted and talented among his other responsibilities. Victoria has an Inspector of Schools heading a Task Force of seconded personnel. Among Catholic Education Offices and other States' systems a concern for the gifted and talented is linked to the responsibility for special education. It seems important that the locus of support should include the actual nomination of an officer by specific title.

Support services for the gifted and talented children themselves, as distinct from their parents and teachers, are seen to be necessary. As much can be done by the voluntary, non-education sector, as from head offices or indeed from regional offices.

The following suggestions were made:

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

1. The access of children to local museums, libraries, galleries, archives, CAE's and universities, to resource centres, in brief, can be managed through a system incorporating negotiation with the institution on individual cases, the introduction of particular students to staff, the production of an identity card, the use by students of the facility often in their own time. This requires an inventory of local resources. The support system is most likely to be a committee of principals from a local school cluster making representation on behalf of the gifted students.

2. Camps for the gifted and talented in or out of vacation time, assisting with self-concept, career guidance and counselling on personal problems, provide support and can be organised regionally, bringing in regional support personnel as well as teachers. The system aims to bring clients and resources together in a concentrated period.

3. For some gifted and talented programs, a support with regard to transport will be necessary. For bureaucracies, payment for transport presents difficulties. The support system will therefore tend to be local involving car pools, or support from voluntary agencies such as service clubs, who can be convinced about the merit of supporting talent in their communities.

4. Support for gifted and talented can be provided by bringing in outside experts from CAE's, universities, business fields and so on. There are problems of the limited patience of volunteers, and the phenomenon of early enthusiasm fading is well known. A variation is the rotation of expert or enthusiastic staff around a cluster of schools. In any event, the system would be organised locally.

5. We heard about the gifted and talented experiencing stress, anxiety, and other problems with mental health. The notion of teachers and students negotiating and pre-planning homework assignments, of perhaps storing plans on computer with print-outs for students as a means of reminding forgetful teachers, had the group's support. Homework has been a notoriously *ad hoc* system, often rebounding on students to their disadvantage in terms of stress. A more evenly distributed load would seem to have advantages for all concerned. This system can be supported at the school level.

6. There are broader applications for computers and micro-processors. The whole field of Computer Assisted Instruction has considerable potential as a support for individual gifted and talented students, enabling them to gain access to a far wider range of materials than those available to them locally, as well as giving them practice in such things as problem-solving and simulation. The available hardware and software, and the possible applications of computers, need to be comprehensively investigated in relation to the support of gifted and talented students. Furthermore, the development of materials available from Computer Assisted Instruction should be influenced to ensure that Australian educational and cultural values are fully recognised and incorporated.

7. The negotiation of homework brings up the question of goal-setting and self-determination. Any deliberate support for the gifted and talented students themselves ought to include, for instance, a chance for students in conference with teachers to comment on their month's or fortnight's program, to negotiate themes and work loads. This will again be supported at the school level, but there may be a need to introduce the notion to teachers and train them in the techniques of working with students

to set goals. This would be handled as an inservice education matter by regional or central offices.

8. The mental health of gifted and talented students can further be promoted by the provision of deliberate relaxation activities, for example involvement in the arts. Full and open communication with parents will assist in the reduction of stress sometimes associated with overly ambitious or anxious mothers or fathers.

9. Detailed career guidance in Australia tends to be offered to young people who are at risk of being unemployed and who leave school early. Gifted and talented children have equally pressing needs. Too often it is assumed that because of the wide range of employment opportunities open to them their future careers are easily resolved. It is now believed that detailed guidance involving information about items such as income, degree of mobility, opportunity for independent action, travel, stress, hours of work and so forth is relevant to career choice for gifted and talented children. However, as research indicates that children seek career advice mainly from their parents, any support system should include the discussion of career options with parents as well.

In general, then, gifted and talented children themselves may be well supported in their education by endeavours at the local level, with teachers, parents, other individuals and local organisations contributing in a context of community support to giftedness. The school will be the focus of local effort and the co-ordination of such effort may well emerge from a sub-committee of the school council or parents and citizens' groups. The local endeavour will be supported where necessary by central or regional administration.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Support for the teachers of gifted and talented students can be provided through a number of strategies:

1. All teachers will require knowledge about the identification of the gifted and talented, the placement of students and the interpretation of test results. This can be acquired through publications such as *A Teachers' Guide : Gifted and Talented Children* produced in 1981 by the Education Department of Victoria; liaison with guidance officers and psychologists; and attendance at inservice education courses such as New South Wales' 'Identification of Talented Children'.

2. Then there is self-help. Teachers in gifted and talented programs are likely to be reassured and less threatened if they can be engaged in the decisions affecting the

programs, if their participation is real and affects the course of events. Meetings of teachers from different schools to share and talk can be organised regionally.

3. Especially in schools where acceleration is being practised there appears to be a need for syllabuses in some subjects to be reorganised and made more compact. An intellectually talented student who is making accelerated progress in mathematics, for instance, does not necessarily need the traditional gradual introduction of new concepts and skills. Such re-sequenced and compacted syllabuses could be produced either centrally, regionally or locally to greatly assist teachers.

4. Some views suggest that the best teachers should be with the gifted and talented students at points of entry: Year 1 and Year 7 or 8, for instance. If this is to occur, the teachers will need to be supported, their worth recognised and opportunities given to them to make promotional progress in recognition of their special efforts if they have been successful.

5. Specialist teachers to supplement work in the class-room, curriculum co-ordinators to keep track of gifted and talented students, will support teachers and will be provided by the system.

6. Teachers will be supported by an adequate description of modification to traditional school organisation to cater for the gifted and talented. Withdrawal groups, either partial or total, the appointment of a co-ordinator to work in a school (or school cluster), cross-setting in subjects, variations in timetabling especially in secondary schools, should be described. Additionally, it may be necessary to examine plans for new buildings, or modifications of older buildings, to ensure an adequate physical provision for changed organisation.

7. There are specific issues about support services for programs for gifted and talented children in the performing and creative arts such as building design and maintenance and the accreditation and payment of outside specialists. These issues have been canvassed in a 1978-79 study, *Planning Report; Special Interest Centres*, undertaken by the Planning Services Division of the Education Department of Victoria.

8. The provision to parents of full information and their involvement in all phases of the gifted and talented program will markedly assist teachers by reducing anxiety levels among parents and establishing a consequence of expectations.

9. Obviously, the appointment of advisory staff to service a number of schools will support teachers. Experience suggests that consultant and advisory people are likely to be more credible and useful if they do not have hierarchical status.

10. Teachers will be supported by the regular publication of informal newsletters which incorporate comments on their work and that of their colleagues.

SERVICES FOR PARENTS

The matter of supporting the parents of gifted and talented children is an important one. Such parents need general information, and have particular questions with regard to their own children. Furthermore, it is clear that the education of the gifted and talented proceeds best (as does the education of children in general) in a co-operative arrangement between home and school, with parents assuming a joint accountability with teachers for the success of programs.

Parents frequently ask questions of the following kind:

- how to identify a gifted and talented child, particularly in the formative years;
- how to manage the gifted and talented child in the home and what are the special needs of such children;
- how the school is providing for the child, what programs is s/he undertaking, what methods are used, what organisation, what kinds of assessment;
- what are the possible futures for the child and what career guidance is available.

In these concerns, parents may be supported as follows:

1. There is a need for the production of a brochure for parents, addressing the chief issues in the education of the gifted and talented. Such a publication would be produced in co-operation with organisations of parents of gifted and talented children. Care would be taken to ensure that such a brochure would be free from jargon, and produced in a number of community languages. It would have Australia-wide application with State contact references.

2. Addresses could be given to parent groups by a variety of knowledgeable people such as teachers of the gifted and talented, consultants, guidance officers, principals.

3. Kindergartens and Early Childhood Centres should particularly develop competence in advising and working with parents of possibly gifted children in the formative years 0-5.

4. Most importantly, the school should make available in informal contexts the fullest possible information, with warm and cordial relationships between teacher and parent. The notion of joint accountability for the child's progress should be developed. Similarly, the development of more adequate teacher-parent interviews is critical in school-parent co-operation in the education of the gifted and talented child.

SOURCES OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

While a great deal of support will emerge from central and regional formal systems, the voluntary and non-bureaucratic systems remain very important. There is a number of groups which, in a co-operative context, can assist teachers and children in programs for the gifted and talented:

- Subject teacher organisations
- Organisations of the parents of gifted and talented children
- Service clubs
- Social security offices
- Teacher Federations
- Parent and Citizens Associations.

Particular groups such as service clubs and social security offices are important in the context of supporting teachers and children in the development of compassionate and responsible action. Strom's description of the need for gifted and talented children to parallel intellectual development with the practice of caring for others was seen to be of crucial importance. Voluntary and socially responsible effort by the gifted and talented child will be assisted by a local system engaging the services of some of the groups above. The organisation of these kinds of programs was seen to be the responsibility of a person from a group of schools working with local organisations to co-ordinate effort. This might well need to be preceded by a central system seeking an agreement in principle from other organisations to co-operate in this way.

It is suggested that State associations open to parents, teachers, schools and systems be set up to share information and consider co-ordination of effort. People could meet two or three times a year as a loose State Contact Group for the education of the gifted and talented.

Within a framework of policy and funding, programs can be implemented. The people engaged will be supported, not only by education systems at central or regional level, but certainly by local and voluntary effort.

ACCELERATED PROGRESS

Finally, if the provision for the gifted and talented is to be any more than an enrichment (or tedious enlargement) of what students can already manage with ease, the education system, from pre-school to university has to be examined with regard to the constraints it currently offers to those who wish to move through it at a faster pace than usual.

In the context of accelerated progress for gifted and talented children we have to examine seriously and critically matters such as age of entry into school, age of transition to secondary school, the whole concept of chronological promotion, the school year as the measure of length of a unit of work, the age of university entrance and the requirements and prerequisites for such entrance, the restraints offered by secondary school time-tables - all of which impose exasperating constraints on the progress of the gifted and talented.

True, 'sweetheart deals' are possible: a vice-chancellor will make a concession, a principal turn a blind eye. But this is not enough. In the longer-term, and the process will be slow and painful, institutions will have to be made more open, more flexible to permit gifted and talented children to achieve their enormous potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If there is a single priority to commend to the Advisory Group, it is *that*:

1. The Commonwealth Schools Commission should encourage State and non-government systems to see that provision of appropriate education for the gifted and talented becomes part of the standard system, taken as much for granted as the provision for the visually impaired, and that effort should be paralleled by the modification of those institutional rules which at the moment hinder the progress of gifted and talented children. Where a provision for the education of the gifted and talented already exists in policy terms, it should be given a fresh emphasis and re-statement.

Other recommendations to the Advisory Group are:

2. In the funding of Projects of National Significance, the possibility of inter-State co-operation should be a criterion for acceptance.

3. An investigation should be mounted at the national level into Computer Assisted Instruction, with regard to costs, types of hardware, compatibility, software and the availability of information appropriate to Australian conditions.

4. The Commonwealth Schools Commission should fund the production of a brochure for parents addressing the major issues in the educatien of the gifted and talented child, in co-operation with organisations of parents of gifted and talented children, and it should be published in the major Australian languages.

5. The Commonwealth Schools Commission should fund a resource manual of writings that are commissioned, and then co-ordinated into a manual, principally for teachers but containing sections appropriate to parents, journalists and professional associations. Such a manual in its initial form would be of a general nature and not specific to any system or curriculum, but would concentrate on topics such as programming, continuity, counselling, organisation, planning and management, staff development and evaluation.

REPORT OF TEACHER EDUCATION GROUP

My task is to report on behalf of the group which discussed the education of teachers for work with gifted children.

In the first session, members of the group described programs with which they were familiar in their part of Australia, and in their own institutions, and told us something of the people who teach those courses. We had a very good range of experience in our group, including the head of a primary school, a Professor of education, a Director-General of education, CAE staff members from different parts of Australia, a representative of the Aboriginal people, and a senior staff member of the ACT Schools Authority. So we had a good range of different kinds of experience and different kinds of knowledge. Keith Creed very kindly joined us to tell us about what is happening in Victoria and also to give us a brief outline of what is happening in New South Wales.

We began in that way because we thought that it would perhaps help us to begin to build up some of the networks to which the Chairman of the Commission referred in his opening remarks, and also because we thought it might help us to see what kind of people are needed as teachers of these courses. I should add that we spent a little time discussing whether there was any useful research evidence to help us in this matter.

We asked how successful are these courses, who is evaluating them, and how? We regretfully came to the conclusion that we had very, very little evidence, if any, about these points, and I should like to tell you if I may an anecdote to illustrate the problems which we were up against. This was a statement by Judge Barber, whom you may remember as a Victorian County Court Judge. He was the Chairman of the Commission who enquired into the collapse of the first bridge which collapsed in Melbourne, and he was talking about an experience that he had recently had in Court. He was speaking at a gathering of Old Scotch Collegians. I was then the Principal. He said it had been a most moving experience, because he himself the Judge was an old boy of that great school. When he listened to the prosecution, he admired it as a masterly exposition, and he wasn't at all surprised to find that the prosecutor was also educated at this same school. Then the defence counsel spoke and he too gave a remarkably effective and eloquent exposition of the case; and of course Judge Barber was also not at all surprised that this gentleman too had been a pupil at Scotch. Then the gentleman in the dock acquitted himself extremely well in

answering the questions and again it was no surprise to find that he was also a former pupil of the same school. But, joking apart, that tale does illustrate how difficult it is to identify success, and to identify what caused those people's success in their particular avocations.

We then asked ourselves several questions. For whom should courses dealing with the education of the gifted be provided? Who are the audiences to whom these should be addressed? What institutions and what persons should provide them and of what might such courses consist?

First of all, we thought about courses for the initial education of teachers. We were unanimous in deciding that they should *not* provide for groups of young people specifically intended for this work. What they should do, we thought, was to introduce *all* intending teachers to the immense range of human abilities of all kinds. Abilities, that is, intellectual, personal, aesthetic, spiritual and physical abilities. We must give these students some idea of how tremendously varied people are and of the immense extent to which their gifts vary too. We thought that these introductory courses should give some indication of how teachers may recognise these differences. The courses should also introduce the student teachers to curriculum development and to the modifications of curriculum needed to cater for the very able - the very gifted. We felt also that these courses should ensure that the practical experiences of these young student teachers (when they do their practice teaching in schools) should give them the opportunity of participating in any good examples of what is being done in their own areas. Thus they could gain some idea of the way in which ideas and theories which are mentioned to them are being put into practice. This would also help the heads of the schools concerned to see how important the training institutions believed this experience to be.

We concluded, therefore, that the main work must be done in inservice courses. These should provide first for those teachers who wish, or are likely to be chosen, to specialise in such work with selected groups, such as those of which we heard in various parts of Australia. It should also provide for class-room teachers who have had a good deal of experience teaching normal groups, and who wish to provide effectively for those gifted individuals in their own normal class-rooms. We thought we should also encourage institutions to provide for principals who wish to organise their schools in ways to provide most effectively for gifted children. This might, for example, form part of a course in educational administration, or it might form a short course for this specific purpose. We thought that we ought to try to ensure that the staffs of tertiary institutions are fully aware of what is being done to modify admission procedures in some such institutions. That is, they snould be fully aware of what

is being done in schools so that they can modify, or help to modify, admission procedures so that gifted children who have been accelerated in various ways do not have the experience of going to a tertiary institution and finding they have done it all already, and so become bored. We thought of the need to inform parents and members of the public of what is possible, and of what is available for their children, and how they can best take advantage of these opportunities. We included in that school councils - particularly the sort of situation which prevails in the Australian Capital Territory, where every school or secondary college has its own school council - because we felt that such school councils might form a very useful link with the public in a number of ways. It seemed to me, and I think this was the feeling of the group, that it was the task of principals to educate their school councils about this.

The next topic we tried to consider was what people or what institutions should provide such courses. Tertiary institutions should, of course, provide them - with such courses in most cases leading to some qualification, and available both face to face and also externally. State education departments obviously have a very important role to play. They need to set aside staff (as in Western Australia) to stimulate and organise shorter inservice courses and generally to inspire teachers in this way. They should also provide a wide range of support services. They may need, for this purpose, to bring in people from outside their own State or from outside Australia. They have done this already in a number of cases. The Commonwealth Schools Commission clearly has a role to play, in encouraging the work that is done in education centres and teachers' centres, and also through its program for supporting Projects of National Significance. Obviously, if the Commission can give such support and can publish the results of really worthwhile projects, this material may act as lighthouses and as an inspiration for other people who wish to work along the same lines. Voluntary bodies must be encouraged to make provision. In Tasmania, for example, there is an arrangement whereby on Saturday mornings a group of people interested in and enthusiastic for this work has arranged a program called Explorers Unlimited, which is an enrichment program largely patronised by these parents who wish their children to experience a wider range of opportunities than that which is available in the schools. It is staffed partly by teachers from all kinds of institutions - the university, as happens elsewhere; the CAE; schools (both independent and State); and also by specialist members of the public - museum staff and so on.

Finally, we gave some thought to the question of how teachers should be selected for this work. All of us agreed with the kind of statement we find in Miriam Goldberg's paper, saying that they should be people who are intelligent, scholarly, enthusiastic and intellectually flexible - just like us, we thought!! But the real problem is how to find such people,

how to identify them. Obviously, they must be enthusiastic and they must be ready to volunteer. But it does not necessarily follow that every volunteer has all the admirable capacities for which we are looking. An important point is to clarify what we meant when we said 'intellectually flexible'. We meant people who are ready to acknowledge the limits of their own knowledge and their own experience, and to involve others who may have that experience and that knowledge to help them with their own work. They must be ready to accept a wide range of responses from the able children they teach; and they must also be aware of the need to recognise the gifted, even if their gifts may be veiled because of the restricting backgrounds from which they come; and finally they must be able, and ready, to help their pupils to realise something of the rapidity of change and of the implications of this for the kind of future in which their careers will be chosen, their lives be lived.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The group on Teacher Education wishes to recommend:

1. That means be established whereby departments of education, tertiary institutions, parent groups, non-government systems and teachers' federations can liaise and co-operate in the provision of courses of all kinds which aim to improve the current state of education for gifted and talented children.

2. That award courses in tertiary institutions be established for experienced teachers to include at least the following -

   . knowledge and application of identification procedures and techniques for assessing the needs of individual children which are necessary for appropriate curriculum design;

   . knowledge of and skills in the design, implementation and evaluation of curricula suitable for gifted and talented children;

   . training in the application of a wide variety of teaching strategies which can be applied in the provision of learning experiences for gifted and talented children;

   . knowledge of the supporting literature;

   . knowledge of the range of both human and published resources and how they may be located and used;

   . field work to include both observation, analysis and practice;

. general studies as appropriate, for example future studies, computer studies, group dynamics and advocacy skills,

3. That short courses be available of two kinds:

   (a) to raise awareness of the special nature of education for the gifted and talented child, designed specifically for such groups as

      . parent organisations
      . administrators
      . teachers at all levels
      . community groups;

   (b) non-award courses in specific aspects of education to meet particular needs as expressed by educators, parents etc.,

4. That the Commonwealth Schools Commission use its good offices to encourage the establishment of a National Association for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children to promote the improvement of opportunities for this specific group.

5. That the Commonwealth Schools Commission encourage its officers to consider the needs of this group of children in all projects of the Commission, in for example the Disadvantaged Schools Program, and projects such as the School and Community and Education and the Arts.

GENERAL SUMMARY BY DR STROM

Each of the discussion groups focused on separate aspects of education for the gifted and talented.

In addition to their specific areas of concern, all the groups recommended more supportive conditions and better teaching for able children.

This summary is intended to illustrate some ways in which the overall objective of better instruction can be achieved.

EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

Research is expected to provide clues for improving gifted education. Some of the most necessary and worthwhile studies can be conducted without cost by teachers themselves. To illustrate, educators have known for a long time that students can benefit from feedback relating to assignments and tests.

Only recently have we begun to recognise the value of providing teachers with feedback from students. In the past, the need for assessing teacher performance was not overlooked, but the sources of perception were too limited.

As a rule, teacher evaluation has consisted of occasional classroom visits by school administrators or supervisors who observe methods of teaching and check on the amount of time devoted to various subject matters.

In addition to this formal type of assessment by colleagues, most teachers would like to know how well they are doing in the estimate of pupils.

In particular, are the teacher's personal goals for interaction with pupils being achieved? The need for involving gifted students in this kind of assessment is underscored by their rate of dropout, which is ten times that of the population as a whole in American schools.

The practice of respecting student opinion, especially teenagers', should become more common. By this age level students can be expected to read and objectively respond to instruments calling for evaluation of their teachers.

What about the views of students who are too young to read certain among the items of a questionnaire but whose experience in observing their teacher qualifies them to provide helpful feedback? Should they be left out of the evaluation process?

No. Younger children should be aware of their right and obligation to favourably influence the schools that serve them.

This is especially important now that gifted programs are being offered for very young children. The parents of these children can be counted on to facilitate the contribution of their sons and daughters by reading the items to them and helping them mark responses. In turn, these anonymous feedback forms can be dropped in a box bearing the individual teacher's name.

Finally, responses can be tabulated by the teachers themselves.

The feedback items presented as Appendices A and B are not intended to be comprehensive, nor are they appropriate for students of all age levels. They are intended for children between six and eight years of age.

Evaluation items 1-10 concern a child's personal relationship with a teacher, while items 11-15 involve the teacher's relationship with the entire class.

Naturally, additional items may be appropriate and should be generated by teachers as individuals or as a group representing other student ages. Thus, with ten to twelve year-olds we might substitute for specified items in the example as follows:

4. My teacher comes to class well prepared

7. My teacher thinks she can learn from her students

11. My teacher believes that students should learn from each other

12. My teacher gives tests on what we studied in class

What matters most is that from the very beginning and throughout the schooling process, gifted and talented children are given the chance to help us improve our influence on them (see Appendix C).

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

There is a widespread and mistaken impression that only teachers should be held accountable for the learning of children.

To justify their view, it would be necessary to demonstrate that a single source of influence accounts for most of the variance in school achievement scores. But this is never the case.

Instead, research on learning consistently identifies variables besides teacher behaviour - factors teachers cannot control - such as student aptitude, socio-economic background and the parent-child relationship.

It is the teacher's responsibility to initiate the partnership with parents. Together they can do much more for gifted and talented children than either party can ever achieve alone.

Appendix D shows one way in which teachers can establish a respectful relationship with parents.

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

One characteristic of gifted and talented children that should also describe the adults who teach them is an awareness of self-limitations.

Given the knowledge explosion, individual teachers cannot reasonably view themselves as a sufficient source of learning for able students.

Instead, it is wise to augment one's own efforts by encouraging peer teaching as well as instructions by adult mentors.

Whatever the occupation of volunteer tutors, they can do a better job when they are properly oriented to working with gifted youngsters.

Besides relying on mentors from the community, effective educators also respect the influence of professional colleagues within their school.

Such colleagues help gifted and talented children by means of partial withdrawal or accelerated classes. If able students are to be well served, it is essential that they - like the handicapped - be given an opportunity to learn at their own pace.

This goal is more likely to be achieved when special classes are available, institutional constraints are reduced, administrative support is forthcoming and parents are considered part of the team (see Appendix E).

PARENT EDUCATION

The success of any long-term partnership, such as that between the home and the school, requires that each of the parties continue to grow.

We are accustomed to thinking that teachers should return to college from time to time so that they can remain competent.

But this same line of reasoning is seldom taken when discussion centres on the ever-changing role of parents.

Whether they are rich or poor, parents of the gifted and talented have an important role throughout the years their children are growing-up.

In the beginning, when children are small, parent-education programs are readily available. After boys and girls enter elementary school, however, it is uncommon to find a corresponding parent curriculum. Even more rare are programs for parents of adolescents - despite the fact that most parents feel their role is more difficult when children become teenagers.

Clearly there is a need for greater scope in parent education. Instead of helping only families with young children, our efforts should be redistributed to include families of older boys and girls as well.

To work closely with the family during the pre-school years alone implies that this early period represents parents' only significant opportunity to influence their children's development.

It also suggests that what mothers and fathers will need to learn about being successful at later stages of parenting will come to them naturally.

The fact is that parents are a child's only continuous source of guidance throughout the growing-up years, and they need to acquire a broad understanding of human development that encompasses the period from birth to late adolescence.

Parents have a role unlike that of a third-grade teacher, or, for that matter, any school-teacher whose students are always in the same age group and are taught for only a year.

Because parents must teach children who keep getting older, they need a curriculum sequenced to match their youngster's stages of development.

Just as we insist that public schools offer continuous curricula for children and that the transition between various levels be carefully articulated, so too parent education should become continuous and sequential.

APPENDIX A

MY TEACHER

Primary Grade Level ..... Teacher's Name .....

Directions: Circle one answer for each question. Answer all the questions. Parents or children should turn in the completed form by ..... to the front office.

1.	My teacher helps me when I don't understand	Yes	No	Unsure
2.	My teacher wants me to ask questions in class	Yes	No	Unsure
3.	My teacher gets me interested in what we are studying	Yes	No	Unsure
4.	My teacher tells me when I have done well	Yes	No	Unsure
5.	My teacher offers me choices on some assignments	Yes	No	Unsure
6.	My teacher wants me to decide how well I do some things	Yes	No	Unsure
7.	My teacher asks me to say what I feel	Yes	No	Unsure
8.	My teacher makes me feel my ideas are important	Yes	No	Unsure
9.	My teacher gives me too much homework	Yes	No	Unsure
10.	My teacher pays attention when I talk to her/him	Yes	No	Unsure
11.	My teacher likes working with the kids in our class	Yes	No	Unsure
12.	My teacher handles misbehaviour in a fair way	Yes	No	Unsure
13.	My teacher listens to kids who disagree with her/him	Yes	No	Unsure
14.	My teacher shows us how to treat other people	Yes	No	Unsure
15.	My teacher admits there are things s/he doesn't know	Yes	No	Unsure

APPENDIX B

MY TEACHER

Intermediate Grade Level ..... Teacher's Name .....

Directions: Circle one answer for each question. Answer all the questions. Parents or children should turn in the completed form by ..... to the front office.

1.	My teacher helps me when I don't understand	Yes	No	Unsure
2.	My teacher wants me to ask questions in class	Yes	No	Unsure
3.	My teacher gets me interested in what we are studying	Yes	No	Unsure
4.	My teacher comes to class well prepared	Yes	No	Unsure
5.	My teacher offers me choices on some assignments	Yes	No	Unsure
6.	My teacher wants me to decide how well I do some things	Yes	No	Unsure
7.	My teacher thinks s/he can learn from her/his students	Yes	No	Unsure
8.	My teacher makes me feel my ideas are important	Yes	No	Unsure
9.	My teacher gives me too much homework	Yes	No	Unsure
10.	My teacher pays attention when I talk to her/him	Yes	No	Unsure
11.	My teacher believes that students should learn from each other	Yes	No	Unsure
12.	My teacher gives tests that cover what was studied in class	Yes	No	Unsure
13.	My teacher listens to kids who disagree with her/him	Yes	No	Unsure
14.	My teacher shows us how to treat other people	Yes	No	Unsure
15.	My teacher admits there are things s/he doesn't know	Yes	No	Unsure

APPENDIX C

STRESS INVENTORY

DIRECTIONS: Mild stress tends to improve academic performance. But too much stress can interfere with learning. Your instructor can do a better job if s/he is aware of stress levels. For each item please circle the number corresponding to your feelings about the class.

	Always Stressful	Often Stressful	Sometimes Stressful	Never Stressful
Instructor				
1. Asking the instructor questions is:	4	3	2	1
2. Telling the instructor my opinion is:	4	3	2	1
3. The instructor's expectations of me are:	4	3	2	1
4. The mannerisms of the instructor are:	4	3	2	1
5. Disagreements with the instructor are:	4	3	2	1
Class-room Instruction				
6. The instructor's method of teaching is:	4	3	2	1
7. The pacing of instruction is:	4	3	2	1
8. Participating in groups is:	4	3	2	1
9. Speaking in front of the class is:	4	3	2	1
10. Directions for assignments are:	4	3	2	1
Grading				
11. The method of grading is:	4	3	2	1
12. The daily homework is:	4	3	2	1
13. The tests in this class are:	4	3	2	1
14. Class projects are:	4	3	2	1
15. The class in general is:	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX D

INITIATING THE TEACHER-PARENT RELATIONSHIP

Teachers often acquire much information about the families of their students, but parents usually know very little about their child's teacher. A better partnership between the home and school is possible when teachers make an effort to share something of their background and goals. One way to begin this process is by sending the parents of your students a letter of introduction at the beginning of the school year.

There is no single best format for everyone. What matters most is that you initiate the communication process with parents by sharing something of yourself. The kind of information to be included in your letter of introduction is a personal decision. Some elements recommended for your consideration are:

- Your desire to work with parents
- Your home town and the size of your family
- What led you to teaching
- Your previous work experience
- Your hobbies and interests and how you use them in class
- Your spouse's occupation
- The age and sex of your children
- Your philosophy of teaching
- Your methods of discipline
- An invitation to visit your class

(Cont'd)

The following sample shows what one kindergarten teacher chose to say about herself in the introductory letter to parents:

Dear Parents,

A kindergarten teacher and her class had a bad day.

The teacher said to the children, 'Let's all go home, eat a good supper, take a nice warm bath, go to bed early, and wake up with a smile on our faces. Tomorrow, we'll have a better day'.

One child reported to her mother, 'My teacher says I need to take a bath'.

This is a true story. As we come to know each other throughout the year, our growing relationship as partners in the education of your child will help each of us to better understand and interpret your child's comments and motives as well as each other's.

Let me share a bit of myself with you so that we may start this very important relationship.

I am the mother of three boys, and scouts, soccer and camping take up a good deal of my 'free' time. My husband, Steve, a Certified Public Accountant, changes his conservative image on weekends to become a motorcycle desert racer. Many of our camping trips include a race.

As a child, growing up in a military family, I had to change schools frequently. Many of your children's concerns and needs these first few weeks are similar to those I had.

Hopefully, my memories will help me to better understand and guide your child through these uncertain days.

Please visit our class-room anytime and get to know the other children and me better. If you have any concerns or questions, don't hesitate to call me at home. My number is ..... .

APPENDIX E

TELEVISION QUESTIONS

Watching TV with children is a good way to learn about their perceptions, feelings, level of understanding and values. Teachers can help parents enrich this common experience by providing them with questions to ask youngsters.

Sensing Alternatives	1. How would you handle the situation s/he's in now?
Sequence of Events	2. What has happened in the story so far?
Value Preference	3. How do you want the story to end?
Significance of Events	4. What were the most important parts of the story?
Expression of Interest	5. What parts of the program did you like the most?
Anticipating Events	6. What do you suppose will happen next?
Evaluating Judgment	7. Do you think s/he is making the right decision?
Definition of Terms	8. What do you suppose ..... means?
Character Assessment	9. What kind of person does s/he seem to be?
Identify Climax	10. What was the turning point of the story?

SEMINAR TIMETABLE

Sunday 8 November	
Registration	2.00 - 5.00
Dinner	6.00
Opening - Dr P Tannock	7.30 - 7.45
Keynote speaker - Dr R Strom	7.45 - 8.45
Questions and discussion	8.45 - 9.15
Organisational matters	9.15 - 9.30
Monday 9 November	
Discussion groups	9.00 - 10.30
Morning tea	10.30 - 11.00
Discussion groups	11.00 - 12.30
Lunch	12.30 - 1.30
Discussion groups	1.30 - 3.00
Afternoon tea	3.00 - 3.30
Discussion groups	3.30 - 5.00
Dinner	6.00
Plenary session	7.30 - 9.00
Tuesday 10 December	
Discussion groups	9.00 - 10.30
Morning tea	10.30 - 11.00
Discussion groups	11.00 - 12.30
Lunch	12.30 - 1.30
Plenary session - chaired by keynote speaker, Dr R Strom	1.30 - 3.00
Final discussion and Advisory Group Chairman's summing up - Dr D Mossenson	3.00 - 4.00

NATIONAL SEMINAR
ON THE
EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

MELBOURNE 8 TO 10 NOVEMBER 1981

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